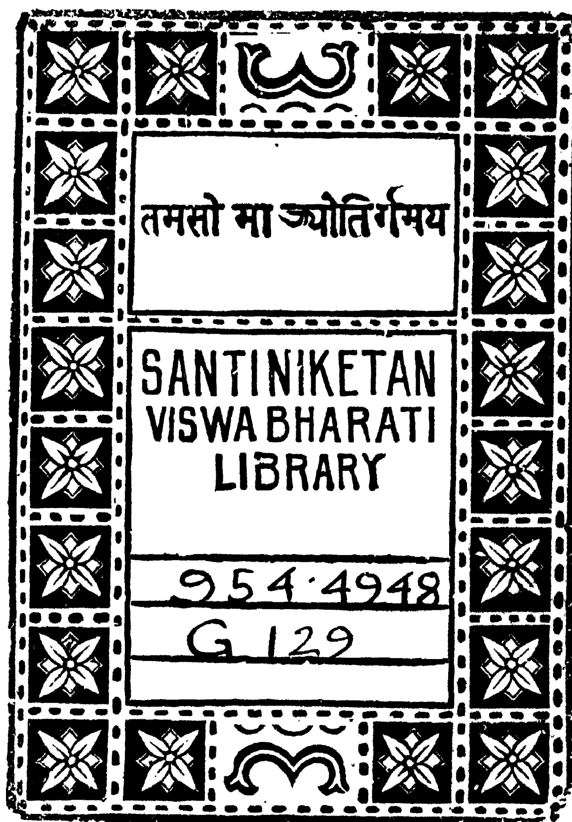

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A HISTORY OF ASSAM

A HISTORY OF ASSAM

BY

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Of the Indian Civil Service (Retired)

SECOND EDITION

REVISED

CALCUTTA AND SIMLA

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This book is dedicated
to the memory of the late
Sir CHARLES JAMES LYALL,
K.C.S.I., C.I.E., M.A., LL.D.,
slight token of the Author's regard and of his gratitude for the
encouragement and assistance which he received in connection
with the enquiries of which this book is the outcome.

INTRODUCTION TO FIRST EDITION.

ASSAM is in many ways a country of exceptional interest. Hemmed in, as India is, by the sea on the south-east and south-west, and by the lofty chain of the Himalayas on the north, the only routes between it and the rest of Asia which are practicable for migration on a large scale, lie on its north-west and north-east confines. The so-called Aryans, and many later invaders, such as the Greeks, the Huns, the Pathāns, and the Mughals, entered India from the north-west, while from the north-east, through Assam, have come successive hordes of immigrants from the great hive of the Mongolian race in Western China. Many of these immigrants passed on into Bengal, but in that province they have, as a rule, become merged in the earlier population. Their influence is seen in the modified physical type of the present inhabitants, who are classed by Mr. Risley as Mongolo-Dravidians, but there are very few who possess the distinctive Mongolian physiognomy or who speak Mongolian dialects. In Assam, on the other hand, although in the plains large sections of the population, like that of Bengal, are of mixed origin, there are also numerous tribes who are almost pure Mongolians, and the examination of their affinities, in respect of physique, language, religion and social customs, with other branches of the same family forms one of the most interesting lines of enquiry open to Ethnologists.

Their religion indeed has more than a local importance, as in it is probably to be found the clue to the strange Tāntrik developments, both of Hinduism and of Buddhism. The temple of Kāmākhyā at Gauhāti is one of the most sacred shrines of the Sākta Hindus, and the whole country is famed in Hindu traditions as a land of magic and witchcraft. The old tribal beliefs are gradually being abandoned; and the way in which Hindu priests established their influence over non-Aryan chiefs and gradually drew them

within their fold is repeatedly exemplified in the pages of Assam History. The various methods of conversion enumerated by Sir Alfred Lyall and Mr. Risley have all been adopted there at one time or another.

Prior to the advent of the Muhammadans the inhabitants of other parts of India had no idea of history; and our knowledge of them is limited to what can be laboriously pieced together from old inscriptions, the accounts of foreign invaders or travellers, and incidental references in religious writings. On the other hand, the Ahom conquerers of Assam had a keen historical sense; and they have given us a full and detailed account of their rule, which dates from the early part of the thirteenth century.

Another claim to notice is supplied by the circumstance that Assam was one of the few countries in India whose inhabitants beat back the tide of Mughal conquest and maintained their independence in the face of repeated attempts to subvert it. Full accounts of these invasions have come down, both from Ahom and from Muhammadan sources, and are interesting not only in themselves, but also from the light which they throw on the old methods of warfare, and from the evidence which they afford of how little superior arms, numbers and discipline can avail against difficulties of communication, inadequate supplies and an unhealthy climate.

In spite of this there is, probably, no part of India regarding whose past less is generally known. In the histories of India as a whole, Assam is barely mentioned, and only ten lines are devoted to its annals in the historical portion of Hunter's *Indian Empire*. The only attempt at a connected history in English is the brief account given by Robinson—some 43 pages in all—in his *Descriptive Account of Assam*, published in 1841. Two histories have been published in the vernacular, one by Kāsinath Tāmuli Phukan in 1844, and the other by the late Rai Gunābhirām Barua Bahadur in 1884. The former deals only with the Ahoms. The latter gives also a brief account of other dynasties who formerly ruled in the Brahmaputra valley. But both are far from complete, and a mass of new material is now available.

The researches of Blochmann have thrown much light on the Muhammadan invasions of Assam, and the late Sir James Johnstone compiled from records in the Foreign Department of the Government of India a detailed narrative of the expedition of Captain Welsh to Assam in 1793 A.D., and of the causes which led up to it. When I was Sub-Divisional Officer of Mangaldai, in the Darrang District, I caused a translation to be prepared of the *Bansābali*, or family history, of the Darrang Rajas, which contains a great deal of information regarding the Koch dynasty, and gave an analysis of it in a paper contributed to the Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal.

In 1894, Sir Charles Lyall, K.C.S.I., who was then officiating as Chief Commissioner of Assam, pointed out that the time had come for a sustained and systematic endeavour to arrest the process of destruction of such historical manuscripts as still survived, and, at his request, I drew up a scheme for the prosecution of historical research in the Province. My proposals were accepted by the Chief Commissioner and a small grant was made to cover the necessary expenditure. In the course of the enquiries that ensued a rock inscription at Tezpur and five ancient copper-plates containing records of land grants by bygone kings were discovered; and these, with two similar copper-plates already known, give a good deal of information concerning the kings who reigned in the Brahmaputra valley between the years 800 and 1150 A.D. In Jaintia five copper-plates were found, as well as a number of coins and a historical manuscript. Manuscripts relating to the rule of the Bāro Bhuiya, the Chutiyas and the Rajas of Dimarua were also discovered and translated. With the assistance of Indian friends, a careful search was made for all references to Assam in ancient Hindu writings, such as the *Jogini Tantra*, the *Kālikā Purān* and the *Mahābhārat*, as well as in more recent works, such as the *Dipika Chand* and the religious writings of the followers of Sankar Deb.

But the most important results of the enquiries were in connection with the records of Ahom rule. The Ahoms were a tribe of Shāns who migrated to Assam early in the

thirteenth century. They were endowed with the historical faculty in a very high degree; and their priests and leading families possessed *Buranjis,* or histories, which were periodically brought up to date. These were written on oblong strips of bark, and were very carefully preserved and handed down from father to son.* The number still in existence is considerable, and would have been much greater but for the fact that, about a century and a half ago, one of the chief ministers of State discovered that in one of them doubts had been cast upon the purity of his descent, and used his influence with the king to cause it to be destroyed together with all others which, on examination, were found to contain statements reflecting on those in power or their near ancestors.

The more recent of these *Buranjis* are written in Assamese, which was gradually adopted by the Ahoms after their conversion to Hinduism, but the earlier ones are in the old tribal language, which is similar to that of other Shān tribes, and is written in a character derived from the Pāli. The knowledge of it is now confined to a few old men of the *Deodhāi* or priestly caste. When the mass of the Ahoms accepted Hinduism, the tribal priests gradually fell into disrepute; and, although they themselves long resisted the proselytizing efforts of the Brāhmans, they have at last given way and have now all taken Gosāins. The result is that the rising generation has been taught Assamese and not Ahom, and in a few years the knowledge of the latter language will have disappeared altogether. To rescue from oblivion the records written in it I selected an educated young Assamese, Babu Golāp Chandra Barua, now a clerk in the office of the Deputy Commissioner, Lakhimpur, and gave him a committee of five *Deodhāis* to teach him Ahom and to assist him in translating their manuscripts. The work was by no means easy; the *Deodhāis* themselves proved far from proficient, and it was nearly three years before all the manuscripts

* For further particulars *see* Appendix D. It may be mentioned here that *Buranji* is one of the very few Assamese words which are derived from the Ahom. The literal meaning is "a store that teaches the ignorant" (*Bu*, "ignorant persons," *ran*, "teach," and *ji*, "store" or "granary").

that could be traced were translated. Having no knowledge of the Ahom language myself I have had to rely entirely on the translations made by this Assamese gentleman, but I have every confidence in the accuracy of his work. I tested his knowledge of Ahom in various ways and found it satisfactory, and the comparison of one *Buranji* with another has shown that they agree in a way that would be impossible if there were serious errors in the translation. I am indebted to him not only for the translations, but also for assistance in the elucidation of various questions of Ahom nomenclature and customs.

Some of the *Buranjis* go back to the year 568 A.D. when the ancestors of the Ahom kings are said to have descended from heaven. The earlier portions are of course unreliable, and they contain little beyond lists of names; and it is not until Sukāphā became king in 1228 A.D. that they can be treated as historical records. From that date, however, they are generally very trustworthy. The following is a list of the chief *Buranjis*:—

Ahom.

(1) From the earliest times to the end of Ahom rule. This is a very complete and valuable record.
(2) From the earliest times to Mir Jumlah's invasion in 1663 A.D.
(3) From the earliest times to 1695 A.D.
(4) From the earliest times to 1764 A.D.
(5) From the earliest times to 1681 A.D.
(6) From the earliest times to 1810 A.D.

Assamese.

(1) From the earliest times to the end of Ahom rule.
(2) From 1228 to 1660 A.D.
(3) From 1228 to 1714 A.D.
(4) From 1497 to 1714 A.D.
(5) From 1598 to 1766 A.D. Deals very fully with the events of Rudra Singh's reign.
(6) From 1681 to 1790 A.D.
(7) From 1790 to 1806 A.D.

(8) An account of the tribute paid to Mir Jumlah.

(9) An account of the relations with the Muhammadans in the years immediately following Mir Jumlah's invasion.

(10) An account of the Moāmariās.

(11) An account of the political geography of Assam in the seventeenth century.

The historicity of these *Buranjis* is proved not only by the way in which they support each other, but also by the confirmation which is afforded by the narratives of Muhammadan writers, wherever these are available for comparison. Their chronology is further supported by the dates on various records which have been collected and collated for the purpose of checking it, including those on about 70 Ahom coins, 48 copper-plates, nine rock, and 28 temple inscriptions and six inscriptions on cannon.

Most of the materials for the present work were collected while I was serving in Assam, but I had no leisure at that time to devote to their critical examination or to the compilation of a continuous narrative. This was done during two periods of leave in England. The book has been printed since my return to India, at a time when heavy official duties have left me but little leisure to devote to the revision of the proof sheets, or to the further consideration of the conclusions arrived at. In these circumstances it is inevitable that there should be defects in respect both of form and matter. For these I can only crave the indulgence of my readers.

E. A. GAIT.

DARJEELING;
8th September, 1905.

PREFACE TO SECOND EDITION.

AS a second edition of this work has been called for, the opportunity has been taken to revise it in the light of material which has become available since the original edition was published. This includes:—

(1) The copper-plate inscription of Bhāskara Varman found in Sylhet in 1912 and translated by Professor Padmanāth Bhattāchārya, and the translation (by Cowell and Thomas) of Bāna's *Harsha Charita* which contains various references to the same monarch.

(2) The *Bahāristān-i-Ghaibi*, a contemporary account of events in the reign of Jahāngir. This has recently been translated by Professor Jadunāth Sarkār, who has kindly sent me advance extracts of the passages relating to certain Muhammadan invasions of Assam.

(3) Professor Sarkār's translation of the description of Assam at the time of Mir Jumlah's invasion contained in the *Fathiyya-i-ibriyya*. This is more complete and accurate than Blochmann's analysis of the same work which was utilized in the first edition.

(4) A manuscript volume in the India Office library containing translations of certain *buranjis* made for Dr. Wade in 1792-3. There are some obvious mistakes in these translations and the actual *buranjis* are not forthcoming. It would therefore be unsafe to place very much reliance on them. But they have occasionally been utilized to supplement the information contained in the *buranjis* enumerated in the introduction to the first edition where they are in general agreement with, but more complete than, the latter.

(5) An account of some Jaintia kings contained in Loch's Jaintia Settlement Report of 1839. This was brought to light by Babu Chandra Kanta Sen when working on the Jaintia Settlement of 1897.

A few changes have also been made in the light of comments made by various writers, and in particular by Mr. A. W. Botham, C.I.E., Professor Padmanāth Bhattāchārya and Mr. H. E. Stapleton.

Finally, some additions have been made to the last tw chapters in order to bring the narrative up to date.

E. A. GAIT.

CAMBERLEY,
10*th February*, 1926.

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

ERRATA.

Page 29, 3rd para. line 1, omit *all.*
,, 69, line 16, for *Bali* read *Dharma.*

A HISTORY OF ASSAM.

CHAPTER I.

PREHISTORIC AND TRADITIONAL RULERS.

Some general considerations.

Dearth of early records.

THE science of history was unknown to the early inhabitants of Assam, and it is not till the Ahom invasion in 1228 A.D. that we obtain anything at all approaching a connected account of the people and their rulers. For several hundred years previously some scattered facts may be gleaned from a few ancient inscriptions and from the observations of a Chinese traveller. Before then nothing definite is known, and our only information consists of some dubious and fragmentary references in the *Mahābhārat*, and in the *Purāns* and *Tantras* and other similar records.

Indications derived from philology and ethnography.

The stories culled from the latter sources cannot of course be dignified with the name of history. They are, at the best, ancient traditions, but even this cannot be asserted with certainty, and some of them may have been interpolated by interested copyists in comparatively recent times. They do, however, contain a substratum of fact, and, in any case, they are fondly remembered by the people.

But before dealing with these stories, we may refer briefly to some general indications regarding the ancient movements of the people which are suggested by philological and ethnographical considerations. So far as philology is concerned, it is, of course, admitted that language is no real test of race. The Ahoms have abandoned their tribal dialect in favour of Assamese, and the Rābhās, Kachāris and other tribes are following their example. The reason in these cases is partly that Assamese is the language of the priests, who are gradually bringing these rude tribes within the fold of Hinduism, and partly that it is the language of a higher

civilization. But there is another way in which one form of speech may supplant another, *viz.*, by conquest. When one nation brings another under subjection, it often imposes its own language on the conquered people. Thus within the last hundred years the Shān tribe of Turungs, while held in captivity amongst the Singphos, abandoned their native tongue and adopted that of their captors. It may safely be assumed that one or other, or both, of these processes has always been in operation, and that, just as Assamese is now supplanting Kachāri and other tribal languages, so these in their turn displaced those of an earlier generation. There is, however, this difference, that whereas now, the caste system, to a great extent, preserves a distinct physical type, the earlier philological changes were accompanied by racial fusion. We know that this occurred after the Ahom invasion of Assam, when many Chutiya, Morān and Borāhi families were incorporated in the Ahom tribal system and, by lapse of time and inter-marriage, gradually came to be recognised as genuine Ahoms. The Ahoms themselves are Shāns, who, according to an eminent authority,* are the outcome of an intermingling of Mons, Negritos and Chinese. The Koches appear to have been originally a Bodo tribe, closely allied to the Meches and Kachāris, but many of them now present the physical characteristics of the Dravidian family.

The fact therefore that, excluding immigrants during historic times, a few communities, like the Kalitas, of reputed Aryan descent, and a few others, such as the Doms, of obvious Dravidian origin, the bulk of the population of the Brahmaputra valley is comprised of tribes whose peculiar dialects belong to the Tibeto-Burman branch of the Indo-Chinese family by no means indicates racial uniformity. All that it can fairly be held to show is that the most recent conquerors, prior to the Ahoms, were speakers of such dialects, and that they imposed their language on the older inhabitants, whose identity gradually became merged in that of their conquerors.

* M. Terrien de la Couperie, in his Introduction to Colquhoun's *Amongst the Shans.* See also, *The Cradle of the Shan Race*, by the same author

With these preliminary remarks the general conclusions to be drawn from a study of the languages and physical type of the people may be briefly set forth.

The human race has been classified by Professor Flower under three main types—the Negroid, the Mongolian, and the Caucasian. The Caucasian is further subdivided into the dark group, which includes the Dravidians, and the fair, which includes the Aryans.* The Negroid type has its head-quarters in Africa, the Mongolian in the eastern part of Asia, whence it overflowed into America, and the Caucasian in Europe and Western Asia. The predominant type in the population of India (excluding Burma) is the Dravidian. This type is distinguished by a long head, large and dark eyes, a fairly strong beard, a black, or nearly black, colour, and a very broad nose, depressed at the base, but not so as to make the face look flat. In the south of India there is a Negritic element which is thought to be derived from a stock akin to the Veddahs of Ceylon, the Andamanese and other tribes of the Indian ocean, and possibly the aborigines of Australia. This very primitive type of humanity may perhaps have drifted eastwards from Africa at a very remote period when the remains of the land area that once linked India with Madagascar were far more extensive than they are at the present day. The Negritic element is probably pre-Dravidian, but our knowledge of the very early distribution of the human race is still too rudimentary to justify any positive statement as to the relative antiquity in India of these two elements of her population.

Some three or four thousand years ago a number of tribes of Aryan race entered India from the north-west. Like the Dravidians, these tribes had a long head, but unlike them, they were tall and well-formed, with fine and prominent, but not long, noses, and a comparatively fair complexion. They almost obliterated the earlier Dravidian type in the Punjab and adjoining parts of north-west India,

* A good deal of confusion has been caused by the fact that the philologists made use of the terms Aryan and Dravidian (which were originally applied to races) to designate linguistic families at a time when it was thought that race and language were correlative terms. It is too late now to rectify this, but it is essential to remember that these words, used philologically, have no racial connotation and *vice versâ*.

while further east and south they produced a mixed race in which the Aryan element diminishes as the distance from the Punjab increases—gradually amongst the higher, more rapidly amongst the lower castes—and eventually in the south disappears altogether.

From the opposite corner of India, through Assam and the eastern Himalayas, there was a similar influx of tribes of Mongolian origin, whose main physical characteristics are a short head, a broad nose, a flat and comparatively hairless face, a short but muscular figure and a yellow skin. In Assam (excluding the Surma valley) and North-East Bengal the Dravidian type has to a great extent been replaced by the Mongolian, while in the Surma valley and the rest of Bengal a mixture of races has taken place in which the recognizable Mongolian element diminishes towards the west and disappears altogether before Bihar is reached. The Aryan invaders spoke languages of the "Aryan" or Indo-European linguistic family, and languages of this family have now become the speech of the vast majority of the inhabitants of Northern India, where they have displaced, not only those previously spoken by the Dravidian races but also, to a great extent, those of the later Mongolian immigrants. Except in the south of India, non-Aryan languages survive only in limited areas (chiefly hills and uplands) which were, until recent times, covered with forest and difficult of access.

The non-Aryan languages still spoken by people of the Dravidian physical type belong to two entirely distinct families of speech—the Dravidian and the Mundā. Languages of the former family are spoken throughout Southern India and also by certain tribes of Chota Nagpur and the adjacent uplands. Other tribes in the latter area speak Mundā languages. There are traces of the former existence of allied languages in the Punjab hills, but there are no indications whatever of their ever having been spoken in Southern India. The Dravidian linguistic family has no known affinity with any languages spoken outside India. Nor, with the exception of a small tribe in Baluchistan,* is

* It is not clear how the non-Dravidian Brāhuis of Baluchistan came to speak a "Dravidian" language, but the fact that they do

it spoken by any people who are not Dravidians by race. The Mundā family, on the other hand, is allied to the Khāsi of Assam and the Mon-Khmer languages of Burma, and belongs like them to the Austro-Asiatic family: this again is a branch of the most widely diffused linguistic family in the world—the Austric—dialects of which are spoken in many parts of South-East Asia and in islands of the Indian and Pacific oceans as far as Easter Island off the coast of South America. Though there are many exceptions, the majority of the speakers of this widespread linguistic family are Mongolian by race, and recent research points to the coast of Indo-China as the place where it probably originated.

These considerations suggest that the Dravidians originally spoke languages of the "Dravidian" family, and that the Mundā languages were imported by Mongolian immigrants through Assam or Burma whose distinctive physical type became merged in that of the earlier Dravidian inhabitants. In this connexion it may be noted that the Mundā-speaking tribes used to erect monoliths in memory of their dead similar to those erected by the Khāsis, who are of unmistakable Mongolian race, and that traces of an apparently Mongolian physiognomy are occasionally to be seen amongst them.*

With the exception of Khāsi, the numerous non-Aryan dialects of Assam all belong to the Tibeto-Chinese family and mainly to its Tibeto-Burman sub-family. The dialects of this sub-family which are current in Assam belong in the main to three groups, *viz.*, Nāga spoken in, and east of, the Naga Hills, Kuki-Chin spoken in Manipur, Cachar and the Lushai Hills, and Bodo, which claims practically all the

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so is not one to which any particular significance need be attached. As already pointed out it is by no means uncommon for people of one race to speak a language appertaining to an entirely different stock. Aryan languages have displaced other forms of speech in most parts of Northern India, and instances of linguistic instability are common amongst uncivilized races, *vide* Census of India 1911, Vol. I, Part I, page 328.

* It is greatly to be desired that thoroughly reliable measurement should be made of the Mundās and Orāons of Chota Nagpur. Those effected by subordinates under Risley's instructions are not very convincing, and several competent observers disagree with his conclusion that the physical type of these two tribes is indistinguishable.

surviving non-Aryan languages of the Brahmaputra valley, the Garo Hills and North Cachar; it includes among others, Kachāri or Mech, Gāro, Lālung, Rābhā and Chutiyā. In more recent times there have been several intrusions of tribes speaking Tāi (or Shān) language, the most noteworthy being that of the Ahoms.

Although in Assam, Khāsi is the only surviving language of the earlier Mongolian invaders, the fact that they penetrated as far as Chota Nagpur and (apparently) the Punjab, shows that they must have entered Assam in great numbers. But as their physical type was similar to that of later immigrants, it is impossible to form any idea as to the extent to which their descendants are represented in the present population of the province. It seems probable that, except in the Khāsi and Jaintia Hills, they were subjugated by later invaders, adopted their forms of speech and gradually intermingled with them.

Duration of Bodo domination.

The wide extent and long duration of Bodo domination is shown by the frequent occurrence of the prefix *di* or *ti*, the Bodo word for water, in the river names of the Brahmaputra valley and the adjoining country to the west, *e.g.*, Dibru, Dikhu, Dihing, Dihong, Dibong, Disang, Diphang, Dimla, etc. In some cases the old name is disappearing—the Dichu river, for instance, is now better known as the Jaldhāka—while in others it has already gone, as in the case of the Brahmaputra, which in the early days of Ahom rule was known as the Ti-lao. The latter word was doubtless the origin of another old name for this river, *viz.*, Lohit or Lau-hitya (red). This name has another derivation in Sanskrit literature, where the water is said to be so called because Parasurām washed off his bloody stains in it,* but there are numerous similar instances of the invention of such stories to explain names taken from the aboriginal languages. Thus the Kosi derives its name from *Khussi*, the Newār word for river, but it is connected in Hindu legends with Kusik Raja; and the Tistā, though its first syllable is clearly the

* *Kālika Purān*, 84th *Adhyāya* of the *Jāmadagnya Upakhyāna*. See also *Bhāgavat Purān* (J. Muir's *Sanskrit Texts*, Vol. I, pp. 458, 459).

Bodo *di* or *ti*, is regarded by the Hindus as a corruption of *trishna*, "thirst," or *trisrota*, "three springs." The Ahoms ruled in Assam for seven hundred years, but their word for river (*nām*) occurs only in a few instances in the extreme east, *e.g.*, Nāmrup, Nāmtsik and Nāmsāng. They called the Dikhu the Nāmchau, but the earlier Kachāri name has survived in spite of them. The Ahoms, of course, were relatively few in numbers, but they were the dominant race; and the fact that, compared with the Bodo tribes, they have left so few marks on the toponomy of the country may perhaps be taken to show that the period for which the latter were supreme was far longer than that for which the Ahoms are known to have ruled.

The Bodo dialects, though still spoken in Assam by more than half a million persons, are in their turn giving way to Aryan languages (Assamese and Bengali), and their complete disappearance is only a matter of time.

Although Aryan languages are now predominant in both the great river valleys this is due mainly to the influence of Hindu priests and to the more advanced character of these languages, as compared with the ruder and less efficient tribal dialects; and the strain of Aryan blood is very thin. It is, however, apparent in some of the higher castes. The Kalitas of the Brahmaputra valley, who number nearly a quarter of a million, have often a distinctly Aryan appearance, and, they are possibly to some extent the descendants of the first Aryan immigrants by women of the country.

Probable cause of successive invasions.

The soil of the Brahmaputra valley is fertile, but its climate is damp and relaxing, so that, while the people enjoy great material prosperity, there is a strong tendency towards physical and moral deterioration. Any race that had been long resident there, though rising in the scale of civilization and gaining proficiency in the arts of peace, would gradually become soft and luxurious and so, after a time, would no longer be able to defend itself against the incursions of the hardier tribes behind them. The latter would then encroach in all directions, and would harry the plains with constant raids, killing the men and carrying off the women, and reducing the country to a condition bordering on anarchy. Then would come the opportunity for some enterprising hill

chief to swoop down with his tribesmen, or a confederacy of kindred tribes, and, after sweeping away the effete remains of a worn-out nationality, to establish his followers in its place. For a time the material resources of the plains would add to his strength, and he would be able without much difficulty to consolidate his rule and beat back external aggression. But time would bring its revenge; and, in the end, the new dynasty would sink just like the one which it had subverted. The history of the Ahoms shows how a brave and vigorous race may decay in the 'sleepy hollow' of the Brahmaputra valley; and it was only the intervention of the British that prevented them from being blotted out by fresh hordes of invaders, first the Burmese, and then the Singphos and Khāmtis, and also, possibly, the Daflas, Abors and Bhutias.

The same was doubtless the case in the Surma valley, which must once have been dominated by Bodo tribes, allied to the Tipperas on the south and the Gāros and Koches on the north. At the present day, there are very few traces of a recent aboriginal element, but this is due largely to the absorbent power of Hinduism: as lately as 1835 Pemberton found that members of the Jaintia royal family were able in course of time to gain admission to the Kāyasth and Baidya castes, and if these castes opened their portals to aborigines of high social position, other less exalted communities doubtless did the same to those of a humbler status.

In the Brahmaputra valley Koch, formerly the name of a tribe, has become a caste which admits proselytes to Hinduism from the ranks of the Kachāri and other aboriginal tribes. A similar process has no doubt taken place in the Surma valley where various communities now regarded as Hindu castes consist largely of aboriginal elements.

In the hills of the Assam range the changes may have been fewer and less violent, but here also there have quite recently been movements, such as those of the Kukis, who in the last century were pushed northwards by the Lushais, and of the Mikirs, who once inhabited the Jaintia Hills. Amongst the Nāgas also there are well-established cases of slow racial drift. Some of the tribes, again, that are now found in the hills were at one time in occupation of the plains, like the

southern Kachāris, who were pushed back into the North Cachar Hills by the Ahoms.

Other causes of disintegration.

Apart altogether from external aggression there was a strong internal tendency towards disintegration. There was no strong national spirit or other cohesive element amongst the Mongolian tribes of Assam, and their natural condition was probably that of a number of small communities, each under its own chief or headman, and independent of its neighbours; a state of things, in fact, very similar to that which existed at the time of the British conquest amongst the Gāros, Khāsis and Nāgas, whose organization in many cases was of a distinctly republican type. From time to time a local chief of unusual enterprise and ambition, or possibly some Kshatriya adventurer, would reduce these petty states and make himself master of the whole country. So long as the central administration was young and vigorous, the tribal headmen would be held in check, but as soon as it became weak and effeminate, as usually happened after a few generations, the latter would recover their lost independence, and enjoy it until it was again subverted in the manner already described.

Slow progress of Hinduism in the past.

The comparatively short existence of the old Assam dynasties explains the slow and intermittent character of the progress of Hinduism in past generations. Hindu priests and warriors undoubtedly found their way to Assam at a very early date. The Indian king Samuda who, according to Forlong, was ruling in Upper Burma in 105 A.D., must have proceeded thither through Assam, and so must the Hindus who led the Tchāmpās or Shāns in their conquest of the mouths of the Mekong in 280 A.D.* The chief ruler in Assam in 640 A.D. was a Hindu who claimed to be a Kshatriya. And yet, in the Brahmaputra valley, large sections of the population are still outside the pale of Hinduism, or in the lower stages of conversion, where their adopted religion still sits lightly on them and they have not yet learnt to resist the temptation to indulge in pork, fowls and other articles regarded by the orthodox as impure. The reason seems to be that in early days the number of Hindu

* Phayre, *History of Burma*, pages 3, 4 and 15.

settlers and adventurers was small, and they confined their attention to the king and his chief nobles, from whom alone they had anything to gain. They would convert them, admit the nobles to Kshatriya rank and invent for the king a noble descent, using, as will be seen, the same materials over and over again, and then enjoy as their reward lucrative posts at court and lands granted to them by their proselytes. They would not interfere with the tribal religious rites, as to do so would call forth the active animosity of the native priests; nor would they trouble about the beliefs of the common people, who would continue to hold to their old religious notions. If the dynasty lasted long enough, the influence of Hindu ideas would gradually filter down to them and they would follow the example of their betters, as has now actually happened in the case of the Ahoms. But before this could come to pass, the dynasty would ordinarily be overthrown; the down-fallen survivors of the old aristocracy would become merged in some Hindu caste,* such as the Kalita, and Hinduism would sink into insignificance until, in course of time, its priests should succeed in inducing the new rulers to accept their ministrations.

The Mythological Period.

The ancient Kāma-rupa.

In the Hindu epics and in Paurānik and Tāntrik literature there are numerous references to ancient Assam, which is known as Prāgjyotisha in the Mahābhārat and as Kāmarupa† in the Purāns and Tantras. Its extent varied from time to time. When the stories relating to it were inserted in the *Mahābhārat*, it stretched southwards as far as the Bay of Bengal and its western boundary was the Karatoya. This was then a river of the first order, and united in its bed the

* The disappearance of former ruling races is one of the most curious phenomena in Indian history. There is no vestige now of the old Bodo rulers of Sylhet. The Khens, who ruled in the north-west of Assam before the Koches, have also for the most part been absorbed in other castes. In Upper India there is now no visible trace of the Greeks, Huns, and other once dominant races or tribes.

† I have retained the Sanskrit spelling to distinguish the ancient kingdom from the modern district of the same name which occupies only a small part of it.

streams which now go to form the Tistā, the Kosi and the Mahānanda. It was held sacred, ranking almost as high as the Ganges, and its tutelary deity, a mermaid goddess named Kausika, was worshipped all over the Matsya Desh, or the tract between it and the old bed of the Brahmaputra, which formerly flowed past the town of Mymensingh. In the *Kālika Purān* it is said that the temple of Kāmākhyā near Gauhāti was in the centre of Kāmarupa, and in the *Vishnu Purān* it is added that the country extended around this temple in all directions for 100 *yojanas,* or about 450 miles. Allowing for exaggeration, this may be held to embrace the whole of Eastern Bengal, Assam and Bhutān. In the *Jogini Tantra,* which is probably a later work, Kāmarupa is said to extend from the Karatoya river on the west to the Dikhu on the east, and from the mountain of Kanjagiri on the north, to the confluence of the Brahmaputra and Lākhyā rivers on the south; that is to say, it included roughly, the Brahmaputra valley. Bhutān, Rangpur, Koch Bihār, the north-east of Mymensingh and, possibly, the Garo Hills.

According to the same work the country was divided into four portions, *viz.,* Kāmpith from the Karatoya to the Sankosh, Ratnapith from the Sankosh to the Rupahi. Suvarnapith from the Rupahi to the Bharali, and Saumārpith from the Bharali to the Dikrāng. Elsewhere Ratnapith is said to include the tract between the Karatoya and the Monās, Kāmpith that between the Monās and Silghāt on the north bank of the Brahmaputra, and Bhadrapith, the corresponding portion of the south bank, while Saumārpith, as before, is the most easterly tract.

Origin of the name.

The origin of the name Kāmarupa is mythologically explained as follows*:—When Sati died of vexation at the discourtesy shown to her husband Siva by her father Daksha, Siva, overcome by grief, wandered about the world carrying her dead body on his head. In order to put a stop to his penance, Vishnu followed him and lopped away the body piecemeal with his discus. It fell to earth in fifty-one

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* The germ of the story is to be found in the preface to the *Gopatha Brāhmana* published in Nos. 215–252 of the Bibl. Ind. pp. 30–35.

different pieces, and wherever each piece fell, the ground was held to be sacred. Her organs of generation fell on Kāmagiri, *i.e.*, the Nilāchal hill near Gauhāti, and the place was thenceforth held sacred to Kāmākhyā, the Goddess of sexual desire.* As Siva still continued to do penance, the other Gods became afraid that he would thereby acquire universal power, and accordingly despatched Kāmdeb, the Indian Cupid, to make him fall in love again, and thereby break his penance. He succeeded in his mission, but so enraged was Siva at the result, that he burnt him to ashes by a fiery glance from the eye in the centre of his forhead. Kāmdeb eventually recovered his original form and the country where this took place became known as Kāmarupa.

Legendary kings of Kamārupa.

The earliest mentioned king of Kāmarupa was named Mahirang Dānab who was succeeded in turn, in the direct line, by Hatak Asur, Sambar Asur and Ratna Asur. No details are given regarding these rulers but the appellations Dānab and Asur suggest that they were non-Aryans.

After them there was a chief named Ghatak, the ruler of the Kirāts, who are said to have been a powerful race, much addicted to meat and strong drinks.† In the chronicles of the Tippera kings it is said that the ancient name of their country was Kirāta, and the word still survives as the designation of a tract in the Sub-Himalaya, between the Dud Kosi and Arun rivers, and of the Khambu, Limbu and Yākhā tribes who inhabit it. In Sanskrit literature the term seems to have been used indiscriminately to designate any border tribe of the northern and eastern frontier.

Narak Asur.

Ghatak, it is said, was defeated and slain by Narak Asur, who is the hero of various stories told in the *Purāns* and *Tantras*.‡ According to these legends he was born of the

* Another piece, the lower part of the left leg, is said to have fallen at Fāljur in the Jaintia Parganas. The neck also, it is said, fell somewhere in Sylhet.

† Manu classes the Kirāts with Mlechchhas. Siva is said to have adopted the appearance of a Kirāt before his duel with Arjuna, and was considered the special deity of that race. The Himalaya-born goddesses Umā and Gangā have the nickname Kirāti. The name of the drug Chiretta is said to be a corruption of this word.

‡ *e.g.*, Chapters 36 to 40 of the *Kālika Purān*, and the *Bhāgavat*, Book X, Chapter 59.

earth by Vishnu, in his pig incarnation, and was brought up by Janak, the king of Videha or North Bihār. He made Prāgjyotishpur (the modern Gauhāti) his capital, and settled numerous Brāhmans at Kāmākhyā. There is a hill near Gauhāti which is still known as the hill of Narak Asur. His rule extended from the Karatoya on the west, to the Dikrāng on the east. He married Māyā, the daughter of the king of Vidarbha, and was greatly favoured by Vishnu, who taught him to worship the Goddess Kāmākhyā. At first he was pious and prospered, but afterwards he came under the influence of Bān Asur, king of Sonitpur, and grew irreligious and presumptuous. He asked Kāmākhyā to take him as her husband, and she assented, on condition that he erected a temple to her on Nilāchal and also constructed a tank and a road to the temple in a single night. He had almost accomplished this task, when the Goddess caused a cock to crow and, claiming this as a proof that day had come, evaded her promise and refused to marry him. Overcome with rage, Narak slew the cock, and the place where he did this is still known as Kukurākātā. By this act he lost for ever the favour of the Goddess.

But his crowning misfortune was his refusal to permit Vasishtha Muni to go to worship at Kāmākhyā, in consequence of which the Muni cursed Narak and Kāmākhyā, saying that thenceforward no one who worshipped at the shrine of this Goddess should see the fulfilment of his desire. By the aid of Siva, the duration of the curse was limited to three hundred years, but Narak had now completely alienated both Kāmākhyā and Vishnu; and he was eventually slain by the latter in his incarnation of Krishna. His capital was defended by *pānjis,* or sharp stakes stuck in the ground, and by numerous outworks erected by the Asura Muru, but Krishna cut his way through with his discus and slew Muru and his sons; he then entered the city and, after slaying thousands of *daityas,* engaged in a terrible combat with Narak, whom he clove in twain by a single blow of his deadly weapon. He recovered the golden earrings of Aditi, which Narak had stolen, and sent the 16,000 girls imprisoned in his harem, together with his 14,000 elephants and his horses, to his own home in Dvāraka, or Gujarāt.

He installed on the throne Bhagadatta, the eldest of Narak's four sons, who is sometimes called Bhagirath by Muhammadan writers.

Opposite Gauhāti, on the north bank, now stands the temple of Asvakrānta, which means "ascended by horses." Krishna is said to have halted there when he came to invade Prāgjyotisha; and a number of small holes in the rock near the river are pointed out as the footprints of his horses.

Bhaga-datta.

Bhagadatta is frequently mentioned in the *Mahābhārat* as a powerful potentate ruling in the east. In the *Sabha Parvan,* it is related that Arjun attacked his kingdom of Prāgjyotisha. Bhagadatta had a host of Kirāts and Chins and numerous other warriors that dwelt on the sea coast, but after eight days' fierce fighting he was defeated and compelled to pay tribute. Later on, when the forces of the Kauravas and Pāndavas were being mustered for their final struggle, he went with a powerful army to the assistance of Duryodhan, and no less than four sections of the *Drona Parvan* are devoted to a narrative of his heroic deeds on the field of Kurukshetra, from the time when he rescued Duryodhan from the onslaught of Bhim to his fight with Arjun in which he was defeated and slain. The issue of this last combat is ascribed to the intervention of Krishna, who rendered harmless the invincible weapon which he had given to Bhagadatta's father Narak.

Subsequent rulers of Narak's line.

This king, it is said, was succeeded by his son Vajradatta.* Narak's descendants continued to rule for nineteen generations, the last kings of his line being Subāhu and Suparua. Subāhu became an ascetic and went to the Himalayas, and was succeeded by his son Suparua, who was afterwards killed by his ministers.

General remarks regarding Narak's dynasty.

It is impossible to say to what race this dynasty belonged, but the use of the appellation Asur shows that they were non-Aryans. Nor is there any clue as to when they reigned. Bhagadatta is described as a contemporary of the heroes of the *Mahābhārat,* but that great epic, as is well known, is far

* This is the relationship given in the *Mahābhārat* and the earliest-known copper-plate. In the later copper-plates Vajradatta is said to be Bhagadatta's brother.

from being the product of a single age, and no one has yet undertaken a critical examination of it in order to distinguish the original text from subsequent interpolations. We may, however, conclude from the numerous references to them in ancient literature, as well as from the remarkable way in which their memory has been preserved by the people of Assam down to the present day, that Narak and Bhagadatta were real and exceptionally powerful kings, and probably included in their dominions the greater part of modern Assam and of Bengal east of the Karatoya.

The story of Krishna's invasion may perhaps be taken to indicate an expedition by some ancient Aryan chief. We have already seen that as far back as 105 A.D., an Indian king named Samuda was reigning in Upper Burma, while in 322 A.D., a prince of Cambod in north-west India set up a kingdom in Siam; it is, therefore, by no means improbable that other adventurers found their way, at a still earlier period, to Northern Bengal and Assam.

Notes on Prāgjyotisha.

The capital of Narak and his descendants was Prāgjyotishpur, the modern Gauhāti. *Prāg* means former or eastern, and *jyotisha*, a star, astrology, shining. Prāgjyotishpur may, therefore, be taken to mean the City of Eastern Astrology. The name is interesting in connection with the reputation which the country has always held as a land of magic and incantation and with the view that it was in Assam that the Tāntrik form of Hinduism originated. From its commanding position on the Brahmaputra and its proximity to the sacred temple of Kāmākhyā, it is probable that many other kings also made this town their capital.

The rape of Rukmini.

Krishna frequently appears in Assam Mythology. In the *Bhāgavat* it is narrated that there was a king named Bhishmak, who ruled in Vidarbha, which, according to popular tradition in Assam, is the designation of the country round Sadiya. According to ordinary Paurānik accounts Vidarbha corresponds to the modern Berar, but this is not the only case in which the early Hindu settlers in Assam assigned local sites for the occurrences mentioned in Hindu Mythology. Numerous similar instances occur in Further India, and even in Java, where many of the events narrated in the Mahābhārat have been given a local habitation. The

Brahmaputra valley was known to the Buddhists of Further India as Weisali. Bhishmak's capital was called Kundina, a name which still survives in the Kundil river at Sadiya; and the ruins of an extensive fort, about 24 miles north of that town, between the gorges of the Dikrāng and Dibong rivers, are said to be the remains of his capital.* The walls are of no great height, but they are very well preserved; they consist of from six to nine courses of hewn stone (chiefly granite) surmounted by a breastwork of bricks, loopholed, but without any binding of cement. In the same locality are four large tanks and the brick foundations of what must have been extensive buildings.

Bhishmak had five sons and a daughter named Rukmini. Krishna, having heard of her beauty, was anxious to marry her, but her father had arranged to give her to another prince named Sisu Pāl, whose fort may still be seen a few miles to the east of the one attributed to Bhishmak. Rukmini secretly sent the news to Krishna and, on the day fixed for her marriage, the latter suddenly appeared and carried her off in his chariot. He was pursued by the crowd of princes who had come to assist at the wedding, but he defeated them and married Rukmini at Kundina amid the rejoicings of the people. Many of the marriage songs current in Assam contain allusions to this legend, which has been translated into Assamese and published under the title *Rukmini Haran*.†

Bān Raja of Sonitpur.

There is another story told in the *Bhāgavat*, and also in the *Vishnu Purān*, to which a local site has been assigned. Bali, king of Sonitpur, "the city of blood" now known by the Assamese equivalent, Tezpur, had numerous sons, of whom Bān, the eldest, succeeded him. Bān, who was the contemporary of Narak, had many sons and one daughter, Ushā by name. Ushā was very beautiful and attracted the attention of Aniruddha, Krishna's grandson, who entered the castle where she was guarded and married her according to the Gandharva ceremony. He was seen and captured, after a valiant resistance, but was rescued by Krishna, who defeated Bān in a great battle, which is said to have been fought on

* These ruins have been described by Hannay in the J. A. S. B. of 1848.

† Veda Press, Calcutta, 1890.

the site of what is now known as the Tezpur *bil*. This story has been given an Assamese garb in a little book called *Kumār Haran*.*

Bān Raja's fort is said to have been on the site now occupied by the Tezpur court-house. Numerous carved stones and frescoes are still to be seen in the locality, but they seem to have belonged to temples rather than to a palace. About a mile to the west is an old silted-up tank which is ascribed to his time, and another tank in the same neighbourhood still bears the name of Kumbhanda his prime minister. His grandson Bhāluka made his capital at Bhālukpung, not far from Bālipāra at the foot of the Aka hills, where the remains of old fortifications are still visible. The Akas are said to claim this prince as their progenitor; and it is, perhaps, not impossible that they are the remains of a people who once ruled in the plains and were driven into the hills by some more powerful tribe.

Raghu's victory over king of Prāgjyotisha.

In Canto IV of the *Raghu Vansa* it is narrated that Raghu crossed the Lohit, *i.e.*, the Brahmaputra, and defeated the king of Prāgjyotisha, who gave him a number of elephants as tribute.

Other traditional kings.

According to the *Jogini Tantra* a Sudra named Debesvar was ruling in Kāmarupa at the commencement of the *Sak* era. Mention is also made of Nara Sankar or Nāgākhya, who flourished towards the end of the fourth century at Pratāpgarh in Bishnāth, where the ruins of a fort attributed to him are still in existence, and of four kings, Mimang, Gajang, Sribang and Mrigang, who ruled for two hundred years at Lohityapur.

A Kshatriya named Dharma Pāl, it is said, came from the west and founded a kingdom. He made his capital west of Gauhāti and attracted thither a number of Brāhmans and other high-caste Hindus from Upper India. The sage Kendu Kulai is said to have lived in his reign. He was succeeded in turn by Padma Nārāyan, Chandra Nārāyan and others, ending with Rām Chandra, whose capital was at Ratnapur in the Mājuli. This place is mentioned in the old legends as the capital of various kings, amongst others of Kusāranya, son

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* Veda Press, Calcutta, 1891.

of Harabinda, who is said in the *Dipika Chand* to have ruled over Gaur, Kāmarupa and Jaintia; it is reputed to have been washed away owing to a change in the course of the Brahmaputra river.

Arimatta. Rām Chandra had a beautiful wife who was raped by the Brahmaputra river and gave birth to a son named Arimatta.* This prince founded a kingdom further west and defeated many other chiefs. At last he came into conflict with Rām Chandra and killed him, not knowing till afterwards of his relationship with him. According to other accounts he accidentally shot his father with an arrow which he had discharged at a deer. In any case, the sin of patricide is generally attributed to him, and many stories are told of his vain efforts to atone for the sin which he had unwittingly committed.

It is not certain where Arimatta ruled, but most accounts place his kingdom in Lower Assam. His capital is said to have been at the Baidargarh, near Betna in Kāmrup, where a high embankment forming a square, each side of which is about four miles long, is still in existence. He was attacked by a king named Phengua, of the house of Kāmatāpur, who advanced with an army of Meches and Koches, armed with bows and arrows, and threw up an embankment ten miles west of the Baidargarh; this embankment is in the Dhumdhuma Mauza and is still known as Phenguagarh. Phengua was at first defeated. He then engaged in an intrigue with Arimatta's wife Ratnamālā, and with her aid spoilt the bow-strings of his soldiers, defeated and slew him, and took possession of his capital. He put Ratnamālā to death, saying that, as she had been unfaithful to her late husband, she would probably be false also to him, if he were to fulfil his promise and marry her. Arimatta's son Ratna

* The traditions vary as to the name and lineage of the king whose wife gave birth to Arimatta, and it is useless trying to reconcile them. One version is given in the text. Another is that he was of the Nāgākhya line, and another that he was the descendant of three kings named Māyurdhvaj, Tāmradhvaj and Pratāppuriya who ruled in succession at Ratnapur; the wife of the last mentioned was Hārmāti, the daughter of Hirabinda, who was descended from Irābatta, king of Saumār. Others, again, identify him with Mrigang, who has already been mentioned.

Singh continued the war, and eventually overcame Phengua Raja and killed him. He afterwards lost his kingdom, owing, it is said, to the curse of a Brāhman, with whose wife he had carried on an intrigue.

In the Sahari Mauza in Nowgong are the remains of an old fort with high embankments known as the Jongālgarh. This is alleged to have been the capital of Jougāl Balahu, another son of Arimatta, who was defeated by the Kachāris and drowned himself in the Kallang river.

Many legends cluster round Arimatta, but it would serve no useful purpose to discuss them further, as it is quite impossible to unravel the truth from the various conflicting stories that are current amongst the people. The Rajas of Rāni and Dimarua both claim to be descended from him, as well as from Narak and Bhagadatta.

We may conclude our notice of the legendary period by a story culled from Muhammadan sources. In the introduction to Firishta's history* it is related that Kidar Brāhman, a powerful king of Northern India, was overthrown by Shankal or Shangaldib, who came from Koch, that is to say, from the tract east of the Karatoya, or Kāmarupa. He first conquered, it is said, Bang, or the country east of the Bhāgirathi, and Bihār, and then collected an enormous army and vanquished Kidar in several hard-fought battles. He founded the city of Gaur or Lakhnauti, which, it is said, remained the capital of the kings of Bengal for two thousand years.† He was very proud and magnificent, and had a force comprising 4,000 elephants, 100,000 horse and 400,000 foot. Shankal.

His downfall is ascribed to Afrāsiyāb, the king of Turān or Scythia. The original Afrāsiyāb is believed to have conquered Persia about seven centuries before the Christian era, but the name, which means "conqueror of Persia," was assumed by others of the family, and the monarch here referred to may have been a subsequent ruler of the same

* Dowson's Elliot's *History of India*, Vol. VI, page 533.

† If this story of the founding of Gaur by an aboriginal tribe of Koch or Gāro affinities could be relied upon, it would suggest the query whether the name of Gaur is not in some way connected with Gāro. There is another Gaur under the Gāro hills in Sylhet.

dynasty. However that may be, he appears to have claimed tribute, which Shankal refused to pay. He sent an army of 50,000 Mongols against him, and a fierce battle took place in the mountains of Koch near Ghorāghāt. The Mongols were defeated by overwhelming numbers and retreated into the mountains. They entrenched themselves, but were on the point of being annihilated, when Afrāsiyāb hurried up with reinforcements from his capital Gangdozh, beyond the Himalayas, and utterly defeated Shankal. The latter retreated, first to Lakhnauti and then to the mountains of Tirhut, where he eventually made his submission and was carried off by Afrāsiyāb.*

Conclusion. The above account of the traditional rulers of Assam does not profess to be at all exhaustive. Religious books and other old writings contain lists of many other kings, but it is impossible to say if they are genuine, and if so, who the kings were and where they reigned; and to refer to them at length would be a waste of time and space. The dynasties mentioned above are those that are best known, and although a great part of the stories told of them may be fictitious, it is probable that there is nevertheless a basis of actual fact.

There are numerous references to Pāl kings, but the names vary greatly in different lists. The reason is that the title Pāl was assumed by many different Rajas: Nar Nārāyan added Bhu Pāl after his name, and one of the dynasties brought to light in two recently discovered copper-plates also used the title, though they were in no way related to the well-known Pāl kings of Bengal; at the present day in that Province the title is a favourite one with low-caste zamindars who wish to hide their humble origin.

Reason for small number of monuments of ancient times in Assam. Some of the legends which have been mentioned suggest that in the distant past the inhabitants of the country which we now call Assam attained considerable power and a fair degree of civilization; and this view is confirmed by the narrative of the Chinese pilgrim Hiuen Tsiang and by the

* According to Maulavi Abdus Salam (translation of the *Riyāz-us-Salātin*, p. 56), Firdausi in his great epic mentions an Indian Prince, named Shangal, in connection with the adventures of Bahram Gaur, a Persian monarch of the Sassanian dynasty who reigned in the middle of the fourth century.

copper-plate inscriptions which will be referred to in the next chapter. This being so, the question will doubtless be asked why so few memorials of their time have come down to us. The reason is that nature has vied with man in destroying them. The Brahmaputra valley is an alluvial country, and the impetuous, snow-fed rivers which debouch from the Himalayas find so little resistance in its friable soil that they are constantly carving out new channels and cutting away their banks; consequently no buildings erected in their neighbourhood can be expected to remain for more than a limited time, except at a few points like Gauhāti, where rock pierces through the alluvium.

Though occurring at distant intervals, violent earthquakes are, in Assam, quite as great a cause of destruction as fluvial action; there are few masonry structures which could resist a shock like that of 1897, which not only laid in ruins the towns of Shillong, Gauhāti and Sylhet, but also overthrew many of the monoliths, which are so marked a feature of the Khāsi and Jaint'a Hills, and broke down most of the piers of the Sil Sāko, an ancient stone bridge, not far from Hājo, which marks the bed of a river that has long since left it and taken another course. A less sudden, but almost equally potent, cause of damage is found in the luxuriant vegetation of the country. The *pipal* (ficus religiosa) in particular is a great enemy of masonry buildings; and once a seed of this tree has germinated in the interstices of such a building, its downfall is only a question of time. Owing to this cause, many even of the more recent Ahom palaces and temples are already in a state of decay.

Of the damage done by man, it is necessary only to mention the way in which religious zeal led the early Musalman invaders to break down Hindu temples, and the widespread havoc wrought by the Burmese in a spirit of wanton mischief.

The ruins which still survive represent only an inconsiderable fragment of the buildings that were once in existence, but more will doubtless come to light when the jungle which now covers so vast an area in Assam comes to be removed to make way for the extension of cultivation.

CHAPTER II.

THE PERIOD FROM THE SEVENTH TO THE TWELFTH CENTURIES.

Materials for history.

THE first authentic information regarding ancient Kāmarupa is furnished by the Chinese pilgrim Hiuen Tsiang who visited India in the first half of the seventh century of our era and on his return to China wrote an account of his travels and gave a fairly comprehensive description of the various kingdoms which he visited. Apart from what he has recorded and from one incident mentioned in Bana's *Harsha-Charita* and another in the story of a Chinese invasion of Tirhut, our knowledge of Kāmarupa prior to the end of the twelfth century is confined to the information contained in the inscriptions on certain ancient copper-plates and on a rock on the bank of the Brahmaputra, near Tezpur. It was the practice of ancient Indian rulers, when making grants of land to Brāhmans, to record the fact on copper-plates which served as the donees' title deeds. The inscriptions were drawn up by pandits attached to the court, and the language was usually Sanskrit verse. They commenced with a brief narrative of the ruler's ancestry, and usually gave some account of his personal qualities, his capital and the extent of country ruled by him. After this preamble, which to us forms the most interesting part, followed the name and other particulars of the grantee and the specification of the lands granted to him. None of the old Assam grants bear dates other than the regnal year of the ruling monarch. Most of them were recorded on a set of three copper-plates, of which the centre one only was inscribed on both sides. These plates had a hole at one end, and were held together by a ring passed through this hole. To the ring was attached the seal of the ruler, usually heart-shaped, containing in relief his emblem (*e.g.*, an elephant *en face*) and below it his name and titles. Altogether seven sets of copper-plates have been discovered, the inscriptions on which record grants of land made by the kings of ancient Kāmarupa, viz.:—

(*i*) The Panchakhanda (Sylhet) grant of Bhāskara Varman. This was discovered in 1912 and

AN INSCRIBED COPPER-PLATE.





has been described by Professor Padmanath Bhattacharya in *Epigraphia Indica,* Vol. XII, page 65.

(*ii*) The Tezpur grant of Vana Māla. This was described in the Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal for 1840, page 766. The record is unsatisfactory both with regard to the original text and its translation.

(*iii*) The Nowgong grant of Bala Varman. This was brought to light by me in 1895 and was described by the late Dr. Hœrnle in the Journal of the same Society for 1897, Part I, page 285. On palæographical groups Hœrnle thought that this inscription was prepared about 990 A.D.

(*iv*) and (*v*) The Suāl Kuchi and Bargāon grants of Ratna Pāla. These were obtained by me in 1896 and 1897 and deciphered in the Journal for 1898, Part I, page 99, by Hœrnle, who attributed them to the first half of the eleventh century. The translation of the Bargāon grant, which is typical of the whole series, is given in Appendix C.

(*vi*) The Gauhāti grant of Indra Pāla. This was obtained by me in 1893 and deciphered by Hœrnle in the Journal for 1897, Part I, page 29.

(*vii*) The Benares grant of Vaidya Deb. This was found at Kamauli (Benares) in 1892 and deciphered in *Epigraphia Indica* (Vol. II, page 347) by Professor Venis, who calculated that it was prepared in 1142 A.D.

The Tezpur rock inscription was shown to me in 1893 by an Indian gentleman. It was at once photographed, but the result was not satisfactory. Some years afterwards the name of the king and his date were read from a rubbing, but it was not until 1917 that the full inscription was deciphered by Mahamahopadhyaya Hara Prasad Sastri, in the Journal of the Bihar and Orissa Research Society, 1917, page 508.

Hiuen Tsiang's visit to

Hiuen Tsiang was studying "the profound law of Buddha" at the Nālanda monastery in Magadha, or south Bihar, when Kumār Bhāskara Varman, the king of

Bhāskara Varman.

Kāmarupa, sent messengers to invite him to his capital. He at first declined to go, but was induced to change his mind by Silabhadra, "master of *Shāstras*," who pointed out that it was his duty to propagate the true law, and that he ought not to neglect the opportunity offered by this invitation from a king who listened to "the teaching of heretics." From Paundra Vardhana "going east 900 *li* or so (about 150 miles), crossing the great river Kalotu, we come to the country of Kāmarupa," which Hiuen Tsiang describes as follows:—

> The country of Kāmarupa is about 10,000 *li* (nearly 1,700 miles) in circuit. The capital town is about 30 *li*. The land lies low, but is rich and regularly cultivated. They cultivate the jack fruit and the cocoanut. These trees, though numerous, are nevertheless much valued and esteemed. Water led from the river or from banked-up lakes flows round the towns. The climate is soft and temperate. The manners of the people are simple and honest. The men are of small stature and their complexion a dark yellow. Their language differs a little from that of mid-India. Their nature is very impetuous and wild; their memories are retentive and they are earnest in study.
>
> They adore and sacrifice to the Devas and have no faith in Buddha; hence from the time Buddha appeared in the world, even down to the present day, there never as yet has been built one *Sanghārāma* as a place for the priests to assemble. Such disciples as there are, are of a pure faith, say their prayers secretly and that is all. There are abundant Deva temples, and different sectaries to the number of several myriads. The present king belongs to the old line of Nārāyan Deb. He is of the Brāhman caste. His name is Bhāskara Varman, his title, Kumār. From the time that this family seized the land and assumed the Government, there have elapsed a thousand generations. The king is fond of learning and the people are so likewise in imitation of him. Men of high talent from distant regions, seeking after

office, visit his dominions. Though he has no faith in Buddha, yet he much respects Sramanas of learning.

On the east this country is bounded by a line of hills, so that there is no great city to the kingdom. The frontiers are contiguous to the barbarians of the south-west of China. These tribes are in fact akin to those of the Mān people (*i.e.*, "the south-west barbarians") in their customs. After a two months' journey we reach the south-western frontier of the province of Szechuen. But the mountains and rivers present obstacles, and the pestilential air, the poisonous vapours, the fatal snakes, the destructive vegetation, all these causes of death prevail.

On the south-east of this country herds of wild elephants roam about in numbers, therefore in this district they use them principally for war. Going 1,200 or 1,300 *li* to the south (about 200 miles) we come to Samatata (East Bengal).*

The great river which our traveller crossed before entering Kāmarupa was clearly the Karatoya, while, as the eastern boundary was a line of hills adjacent to the tribes on the Chinese frontier, the country evidently extended as far to the east as does the modern province of Assam. As its circumference was nearly 1,700 miles, it must have included the whole of Assam (except perhaps the Naga hills, Lushai hills and Manipur) and also Bhutān, North Bengal as far west as the Karatoya, and the part of Mymensingh which lies to the east of the old course of the Brahmaputra. It was in any case far larger than the adjoining kingdoms of Paundra Vardhana and Samatata, the circumference of which is placed at only 700 and 500 miles, respectively.

There were at this period no large towns, and the capital of the country does not appear to have been a place of much importance. The only indication which is given as to its locality is that it lay 150 miles east of Paundra Vardhana. Cunningham, after identifying the latter place with Pabna, concluded that it was at Kāmatāpur. This place, however, is north rather than east of Pabna, and the identification of

* Beal's *Buddhist Records of the Western World*, Vol. II, p. 195.

Pabna with Paundra Vardhana is open to doubt. The site of this town is more likely to have been at Mahāsthān on the right bank of the Karatoya, or at Pandua near Malda. In either case the distance to Gauhāti would exceed 150 miles, and it would thus seem that at that time the capital was somewhere further west, either in the Goālpāra district or the Koch Bihār State, or in the north-east of Rangpur.

The short stature and yellow complexion of the inhabitants, and their alleged affinities with the tribes on the south-west of China, may be taken as proving their Mongolian origin. To what extent the common people had come under the influence of Hinduism is uncertain, but it was the religion of the Court. The king is described as a Brāhman, but most probably this merely means that he was a Hindu and not a Buddhist. Varman (*Varmma*, armour or defence) was a common Kshatriya title and, as such, was frequently appropriated by aboriginal converts to Hinduism of high rank; it was used, amongst others, by Harjjara, who was ruling in 830 A.D., and, in more recent times, by members of the Kachāri aristocracy Hiuen Tsiang speaks very positively regarding the absence of Buddhists, both in his own time and at an earlier period. It was formerly thought that Buddhism had at one time great vogue in Assam, but this view seems to have been erroneous. There is no trace of this religion in the old records and inscriptions. The tradition amongst the Tibetans that Buddha died in Assam has been proved to be incorrect. The old rock-carved figure at Gauhāti, which is now worshipped as Janārdan Buddh, is said by Bloch to be an image of Vishnu; and the same authority asserts that the image in the temple at Hājo, which was once thought to have been a Buddha, is really a statue of the Man-Lion incarnation of Vishnu of the ordinary mediæval type. On the other hand, Bhāskara Varman was well disposed towards Buddhist monks, and this religion was firmly established both in Samatata to the south and in Paundra Vardhana to the east, both of which kingdoms boasted of monasteries and of Stupas erected by Asoka.

Bhāskara Varman's

Bhāskara Varman was the contemporary of Harsha Vardhana, otherwise known as Siladitya, hereditary king of

Thanesvar, who ruled from 606 to 648 A.D. and established himself as Lord Paramount of the whole of the Ganges valley. In an account of the early part of his reign by one of his courtiers* it is said that just at the time when Harsha succeeded his brother on the throne of Thanesvar, an ambassador named Hamsawega arrived from Bhāskara Varman, who also had just succeeded to the throne and was anxious to secure Harsha's friendship. The ambassador brought many valuable presents, including jewels, heirlooms handed down by Bhagadatta and other early kings of Kāmarupa, pieces of silk, leather bucklers, camphor, musk, betel-nuts *chaunris* (fly whisks), finely-written books with leaves of bark, and a miracle-working umbrella obtained by Narak from Varuna. Harsha received Hamsawega most cordially, and sent him back with reciprocal presents in charge of envoys of high rank.

relations with Harsha Vardhana.

It is said that while in camp in Bengal Harsha Vardhana met Hiuen Tsiang and was greatly attracted by his discourse. He, therefore, resolved to hold a great assembly at Kanauj in order to give the greatest possible publicity to his teaching. The invitation to attend this assembly reached the pilgrim during his visit to Kāmarupa; and as Bhāskara Varman had himself been invited to attend, the two went together. The pilgrim tells us that Harsha marched to Kanauj in state along the south bank of the Ganges, while Bhāskara Varman, who seems to have been the most important of the attendant Rajas, kept pace with him on the opposite bank: he had with him five hundred elephants clad in armour. Kanauj was reached in the spring of 644 A.D. after a journey of ninety days. Daily processions took place there, at which an image of Buddha was carried; the canopy was borne by Harsha himself, attired as the God Sukra, while Bhāskara, clad as Brahma, waved a white *chaunri*. This went on for many days. A second ceremonial followed at Allahabad, at the confluence of the Ganges and Jumna rivers. At its close the pilgrim started on his return journey to China. He was offered many valuable presents, but apart from the money

Bhāskara's visit to Kanauj.

* Bāna's *Harsha Charita*, translated by Cowell and Thomas, pp. 211-233.

needed to defray the cost of the journey, the only thing he accepted was a fur-lined cape, the gift of Bhāskara Varman.

Bhāskara's copper-plate land grant.

Further information regarding Bhāskara Varman is provided by a copper-plate inscription recording a grant of land made by him which was dug up in 1912 at Nidhanpur in the Panchakhanda pargana of Sylhet. It seems that this grant was recorded on four plates, the two inner ones being inscribed on both sides, but only the first, second and fourth plates were found; the third had somehow got separated from the others. It is stated in the last verse of the inscription that the original plates were damaged by fire and so fresh ones were prepared.*

The seal on the ring holding the plates together is probably the original seal, as it is badly damaged, the inscription being obliterated and the emblem (an elephant) very indistinct. In this inscription it is said that after kings of the dynasty of Narak, Bhagadatta and Vajradatta had ruled for 3000 years, Pushya Varman ascended the throne. He was succeeded in the direct line in turn by the following kings, the names of their queens being added in brackets:— Samudra Varman (Dattadevi), Bala Varman (Ratnavati), Kalyāna Varman (Gandharvavati), Ganapati (Yagnavati), Mahendra Varman (Suvratā), Nārāyan Varman (Devavati), Mahābhuta Varman (Vijnānavati), Chandra Mukhā (Bhogavati), Sthita Varman (Nāyanadevi), Susthita Varman *alias* Sri Mrigānka (Syāmadevi). The last-mentioned ruler had two sons, Supratishthita Varman and Bhāskara Varman.†

According to this genealogy Bhāskara Varman was the eleventh in descent from Pushya.‡ If so, and if the average duration of each reign be taken at 16 years, the dynasty was founded about the middle of the fifth century A.D.

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* Professor Padmanāth Bhāttachārya, whose translation is here followed, is of opinion that the copy was made soon after the original grant, as the characters used are those current in the early part of the seventh century.

† The names of the last five kings are given also in the *Harsha Charita* with two slight verbal differences which are due doubtless to mistakes by the copyists.

‡ It may be noted that Pushya was also the name of the reputed founders both of the Sunga dynasty and of that of Harsha Vardhana.

The grant in question was made while Bhāskara Varman was encamped in Karna Suvarna. This country, which lay to the south of Kāmarupa, was ruled by Sasānka at the beginning of the seventh century. There were hostilities between him and Harsha Vardhana, whose brother and predecessor he had treacherously killed, and though he was still reigning in 619 A.D. he had disappeared before the date of Hiuen Tsiang's visit. Karna Suvarna may then have become subject to Harsha Vardhana, and on the anarchy which ensued on that monarch's death, it may have been annexed by Bhāskara Varman. The fact that these copper-plates were found in Sylhet suggests that that part of the country may also have formed part of Bhāskara Varman's dominions.*

Bhāskara sends presents to Chinese invaders of Tirhut.

The last mention of Bhāskara Varman occurs in the story of Wang-hiuen-t'se's invasion of Tirhut about 648 A.D. He captured and carried off to China Arjun, Harsha's minister, who had usurped the throne after his death, and subdued 580 walled towns. "Kumāra, the king of Eastern India," who was evidently Bhāskara Varman, "sent in abundant supplies of cattle, horses and accoutrements for the victorious army."† It may be concluded from this and from the fact that Karna Suvarna did not come into his possession until after Hiuen Tsiang's departure, that Bhāskara Varman lived until at least 650 A.D.

Dynasty of Sāla Stambha.

All the subsequent copper-plate inscriptions also commence with a reference to Narak "of the Asur race" who conquered Kāmarupa and took up his abode in Prāgjyotisha, "the best of towns." He was followed by his son Bhagadatta, and the latter by others of his line for several generations. Then, "by an adverse turn of fate," the kingdom was taken possession of by Sāla Stambha, "a great chief of the Mlechchhas," who was followed by Vigraha Stambha, Pālaka Stambha, Vijaya Stambha and others of the same race ending with Sri Harisha. From

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* Copper-plates are most likely to be found in the neighbourhood of the land to which they relate, but this is not always the case. Vaidya Deb's copper-plates, for instance, were found at Benares.

† M. Sylvain Lévi's article 'Les Missions de Wang-huien-t'se dans l' Inde' in *Journal Asiatique*, 1900.

the names of these Mlechchha kings it may be concluded that they, like so many of their successors, were converted to Hinduism as soon as they became worthy of the notice of the local Brāhman priests.

The only clue as to the period when they ruled is furnished by the statement in the copper-plate inscriptions of Ratna Pāl that twenty kings intervened between Sāla Stambha and Brahma Pāl. The inscriptions in question appear, from the form of the letters, to have been prepared between 1010 and 1050 A.D., and as the grants recorded in them were executed in the twenty-fifth and twenty-sixth years of Ratna Pāl's reign, we may perhaps take 1000 A.D. as the date when his father, the founder of the dynasty, ascended the throne. Allowing an average of sixteen years for each of the previous twenty-one kings, we get 664 A.D., as the approximate date of Sāla Stambha's accession to power. It would thus appear that he subverted the dynasty of Bhāskara Varman not many years after Hiuen Tsiang's visit to the country. It must, however, be remembered that the date assumed for Ratna Pāl's plates depends solely on palæographical considerations, and that there may be an error of fifty years, or even more, in the figure thus obtained.

The dynasty of Pralambha.

The next line mentioned in the copper-plates is that of Pralambha, the father of Harjjara, who may be assumed to have risen to power about 800 A.D., *i.e.*, thirty years before the time of Harjjara's inscription on the rock near Tezpur. The same date may perhaps be taken as that of the extinction of Sāla Stambha's dynasty, but this is somewhat uncertain. It might be inferred from the Tezpur plates that Pralambha came immediately after Sri Harisha, but the reading of this inscription is not very trustworthy, and it is possible that the latter is identical with Harsha Deb, the father of Jay Deb, king of Nepal, who is referred to in a copper-plate of that monarch prepared in 759 A.D.* The said Harsha Deb is described as the descendant of Bhagadatta, and, although he is said to have ruled over Gaur, Orissa and other countries this may be merely an instance of the poetic exaggeration

* This plate has been translated in the *Nabya Bharat,* Part XIII. 1302 B.E.

which was so frequently indulged in by the scribes and panegyrists of early Hindu kings.

The dynasty of Pralambha has left three relics in the shape of the Tezpur rock inscription and the Tezpur and Nowgong copper-plates. The first-mentioned record is dated 510 Gupta, corresponding to 829–30 A.D. It announces the settlement effected through the good offices of certain military chiefs and Panchakula Brāhmans of a dispute between boatmen and the local toll collectors. The reigning monarch was Maharajadhiraj Sri Harjjara Varmadeva, a worshipper of Siva. His capital was at Hāruppesvara. Suchitta is mentioned as a great feudatory chief and the commander of his army. The inscription on the Tezpur plates supplies the names of three kings, Pralambha, Harjjara and Vana Māla, in the last of whose reigns it was inscribed, while that on the Nowgong plates omits Pralambha, but adds Jay Māla, Vira Bāhu and Bala Varman, the last-mentioned being the donor of the land therein referred to. We have no means of knowing how much longer the dynasty lasted, but if the assumption that the first of the Pāl kings rose to power about 1000 A.D. be correct, it cannot have been more than a hundred years. The ruler immediately preceding the first Pāl king was named Tyāg Singh, who died without heirs and is described in the Ratna Pāl plates as an "illustrious chief." From the absence of any indication to the contrary we may perhaps assume that he belonged to the family of Pralambha, which would thus have ruled the country for a period of about two hundred years in all.

It is claimed by the scribes of this dynasty that they were descended from Narak and Bhagadatta, but in the copper-plate inscriptions of the Pāl kings, who in their turn put forward the same claim, they are referred to as Mlechchhas, or non-Hindus. The explanation doubtless is that both dynasties were of aboriginal origin and that, when they rose to power, they were converted to Hinduism and fitted out with a noble ancestry by the Brāhmans, who have always been adepts in procuring for themselves protection, favour and power by inducing the aboriginal chiefs to enter the fold of Hinduism on the fiction that they are descended from some god of the Hindu pantheon or some potentate in

Hindu Mythology. In more recent times the Rajas of Rāni and Dimarua have in this way been connected with the dynasty of Bhagadatta,* and the Koch, Kachāri and Manipuri Rajas have also been provided by their priests with a divine or a heroic lineage.†

It may be mentioned here that the people in whose favour these land grants were executed were all of them Yajurvedi Brāhmans. Both Pralambha's dynasty and that of Brahma Pāl used on their seals the same emblem, *viz.*, the full face figure of an elephant.‡

Pralambha killed or banished all the members of the former ruling family. His wife was named Jivādā. He was succeeded by his son Harjjara, who, by his wife Tārā, had a son Vana Māla. The latter, who became king in his turn, is described as having a broad chest, a thick-set neck and club-like arms, a noble disposition and a dignified and serious demeanour. Like his father, he was an ardent worshipper of Siva. He enjoyed an unusually long reign. His kingdom is said to have extended as far as the sea-shore. This may have been an invention of the panegyrist, but it should be noted that a passage in a copper-plate of the Bengal king Deb Pāl, who reigned soon afterwards, has been interpreted as meaning that that monarch assisted the king of Kāmarupa in an expedition against the king of Orissa.*

Vana Māla excelled in the arts of peace as well as in war, and erected a great palace " which, though having no equal in the world stood equal (*i.e.*, level) on the ground, though not limited in room, possessed many rooms, and though gay with general ornamentation, was also furnished with true pictures."

* Even the usurper Bharath Singh who was set up by the Moāmarias at Rangpur during Gaurināth Singh's disastrous reign called himself a descendant of Bhagadatta.

† There are many western instances of the same kind. Romulus and Remus were said to be descended from Mars, and Alexander the Great from Zeus Ammon.

‡ *Ind. Ant.*, Vol. XV, page 308. It may be noted that the assertions made in the copper-plates as to the wide extent of the territories ruled by the kings of Kāmarupa have their counterpart in the claims of other rulers to the conquest or overlordship of Kāmarupa. See, for instance, the Allahabad inscription of Samudragupta. (Fleet, *Corpus, Inscrip. Ind.*, Vol. III, page 14.)

Vana Māla was followed by his son Jay Māla who preferred religious exercises to his kingly duties, and, as soon as his son Vira Bāhu was old enough to rule, he "made over to him the (royal) umbrella, of moon-like whiteness, together with the two (royal) *chaunris* (or fly whisks) and then, bravely enduring the rite of religious suicide through starvation, became absorbed into the light of the Divine Being." Vira Bāhu married a princess named Amba, of rank equal to his own and of great beauty. He won many victories over his enemies and then, being attacked by an incurable disease, made over his throne and crown to his son Bala Varman who was "tall of body, in appearance like a lion cub," victorious in battle, harsh to his enemies, gentle towards religious preceptors, truthful and generous.

Bala Varman dated the grant recorded in the Nowgong copper-plate from Hāruppesvara. He rightly called this place his ancestral camp, for it was, as noted above, already the capital in the time of his great great grandfather Harjjara. There is now no trace of any place of this name, but from the Tezpur rock inscription and the locality where the copper-plates of Vana Māla and Bala Varman were found we may conjecture that it was east of Gauhāti and, possibly, at Tezpur.*

The Pāl Dynasty.

About the year 1000 A.D., the ruling prince Tyāg Singh died childless and, it is said, the people, thinking it well that one of Narak's race should be appointed as their ruler, chose Brahma Pāl from among his descendants to be their king, as he appeared best fitted to undertake the government of the country. Brahma Pāl married a lady who was named Kula Debi, by reason of her devotion to her people. This king was of a mild and peaceable disposition and, when his son Ratna Pāl grew up, he abdicated in his favour, and having done so, "went to Heaven; for noble minded men who know the good and evil of the world, know to do that which is suitable to the occasion." His son, of whom we have two copper-plate inscriptions (those of Bargaon and Suālkuchi), was a man of a very different

* Many ancient sculptured stones exist at Tezpur, but no inscriptions have been found, except the one on a rock of which mention has already been made.

stamp, being a strong and warlike ruler. In the land-grant of his grandson Indra Pāl he is described as "the mighty crusher of his enemies who studded the earth with white-washed temples, the skies with the smoke of his burnt offerings, and all the quarters of the earth with the pillar monuments of his victories." It is said that he came into hostile contact with the kings of Gurjara, Gaur, Kerala and the Dekkan, but this is probably mere bombast. He built his capital on the bank of the Brahmaputra and surrounded it with a rampart and strong palisade, whence he named it Durjaya, or "Impregnable." Many wealthy merchants lived there in safety, and it boasted of many plastered turrets. Learned men, religious preceptors and poets, encouraged by the king, made it a place of resort. He is said to have derived much wealth from his copper mines, but no indication is given as to the part of the country in which these mines were situated; possibly they lay in Bhutān which, as stated elsewhere, was probably at one time subject to the kings of Kāmarupa

Ratna Pāl must have enjoyed a fairly long reign, as he had already ruled twenty-six years when the second of his copper-plate inscriptions was drawn up. His son Purandar Pāl was "a ruler of wide renown, liberal, jovial, pious and accomplished in all arts, a hero as well as a poet," and passionately fond of the chase. He obtained as wife a princess of Kshatriya stock, named Durlabhā, by whom he had a son, named Indra Pāl. Owing to a small portion of the inscription being illegible, the question is not free from doubt, but it would seem that Purandar Pāl died before his father, and that the latter was succeeded by his grandson Indra Pāl. This prince was addicted more to study than to war; and during his reign the country enjoyed peace and prosperity. So says his copper-plate inscription, which was prepared in the eighth year of his reign, but if the chronology be correct, it was apparently this prince who, according to an inscription found at Rajshahi, was subjugated by Bijay Sen,* the king of Bengal.

*J. A. S. B., 1878, page 401.

Vaidya Deb.

When the next and last copper-plates (those found at Benares) were inscribed, between fifty and a hundred years later, we find the kings of Prāgjyotisha feudatory to the Bengal line of Pāl kings, who had by this time driven back the Sen dynasty and regained their former position as the paramount power in North Bengal. The inscription records that Tishya Deb, king of Prāgjyotisha, had rebelled against his Suzerain, Kumār Pāl, and the latter sent an army against him under his minister, a Brāhman named Vaidya Deb. Vaidya Deb defeated and killed Tishya Deb and succeeded him as king of Prāgjyotisha The land-grant which bears his name was issued in the ninth year of his reign, from his "victorious camp" at Hamsa Konchi, a place which has not yet been identified. He appears to have remained feudatory to the Pāl kings, but, from his assumption of the title Mahārājādhirāj, his vassalage seems to have sat very lightly on him. Professor Venis, who deciphered the inscription came to the conclusion that it was made in 1142 A.D.

CHAPTER III.

EVENTS OF THIRTEENTH TO FIFTEENTH CENTURIES (EXCLUDING AHOM HISTORY).

Muhammad Bakhtyār's invasion.

For sixty years after the copper-plate inscription of Vaidya Deb, we are left without any knowledge of the condition of Kāmarupa. About 1198 A.D., Muhammad Bakhtyār Khilji overthrew Lakshmaniya, the last Sen king of Bengal, and a few years later he set out on a filibustering expedition to the north.* At this time the ruler of Kāmarupa bore the title Kāmesvar, and his western boundary was the Karatoya river. Guided by a Mech Chief, Muhammad Bakhtyār marched northwards along the right bank of this river for ten days, through a country inhabited by the Koch, Mech and Thāru tribes. He crossed the river by a bridge of twenty-nine arches of hewn stone, and soon afterwards entered the hills. He wended his way through defiles and passes among lofty mountains until, on the sixteenth day, he again emerged in an open country, studded with large villages. He plundered the inhabitants, but was at last checked by an army of Mongol horsemen and compelled to retrace his steps. The return journey was disastrous. The people had removed from the line of march and had burnt everything, and for fifteen days the troops endured great privations. On reaching the plains of Kāmarupa he found that the Raja had destroyed the bridge and was preparing to attack him with an overwhelming force.

He took shelter in a temple, but the Raja besieged him and threw up a bamboo palisade all round his encampment. He broke through this, but most of his followers were drowned in trying to cross the river, and only Muhammad Bakhtiyār himself with a few hundred horsemen succeeded in reaching the other bank. He was there assisted by the

* The story of Muhammad Bakhtyār's invasion of Tibet is told in the *Tabaqāt-i-Nāsiri*, *vide* Raverty's translation, Vol. I, page 560. See also *Riyaz-us-Salātin* (Abdus Salam's translation), pages 65 to 68.

Mech inhabitants, and with their aid managed to find his way to Deokot in the south of Dinajpur.

Other Muhammadan invasions. Ghiyās-ud-din, a Governor of Bengal in the early part of the thirteenth century, is said to have ascended the Brahmaputra as far as Sadiya, but in the end he was defeated and driven back to Gaur. This invasion is mentioned in the *Tabaqāt-i-Nāsiri** where it is assigned to the year 1227 A.D., but the seizure of his own capital by Nasiruddin, eldest son of the Emperor Altamsh, is there given as the cause of his hasty return from Assam.

The next invasion was that of Ikhtiyār-uddin Yuzbak Tughril Khān, about 1257 A.D. For a time he was successful, and he celebrated his conquest by erecting a mosque, but when the rains set in and the country was flooded, his men were reduced to great straits, and large numbers died. The king of Kāmarupa returned from the hills, where he had taken refuge, and gave battle. The Sultan was killed and his army defeated, and only a few succeeded in making good their escape to Bengal.†

In 1337 Muhammad Shah "sent 100,000 horsemen well-equipped to Assam, but the whole army perished in that land of witchcraft and not a trace of it was left. He sent a second army to avenge the former disaster, but when they came to Bengal they would go no farther, and the plan had to be given up."‡

Internal state of Brahmaputra valley in 13th century. The scanty accounts of these expeditions throw very little light on the internal condition of the country east of the Karatoya. They prove that that river was still the western boundary of a kingdom of considerable power and extent, but there is nothing to show how far it stretched to the east. For enlightenment on this point we must turn to the *Buranjis* of the Ahoms, who entered the eastern corner of the Brahmaputra valley early in the thirteenth century, and whose appearance on the scene not only changed the whole course of Assam history, but has provided us, from that time forward, with a connected and

* Raverty's translation, Vol. I, page 594.
† *Ibid*, page 263.
‡ *Alamgirnāmah*, page 731.

reliable account of the progress of events there. It appears from these records that a line of Chutiya kings ruled the country east of the Subansiri and the Disang, with the exception of a strip to the south and south-east, where several small Bodo tribes enjoyed a precarious independence. Further west, there was a Kachāri kingdom, on the south bank of the Brahmaputra, which probably extended at least half-way across the Nowgong district. There are no records referring to the time when the Kachāris were the dominant tribe in this part of the country, beyond a few scanty references to collisions between them and the Ahoms in the *Buranjis* of the latter. They survived, however, as a separate nation until the early part of the last century. Of the latter part of their history, a few scraps of information are forthcoming; and these have been collected in Chapter X. West of the Kachāris on the south bank, and of the Chutiyas on the north, were a number of petty chiefs called Bhuiyās. Each was independent of the others within his own domain, but they seem to have been in the habit of joining their forces whenever they were threatened by a common enemy. The boundary between the tract ruled by these Bhuiyās and the kingdom of Kāmarupa doubtless varied from time to time; a powerful prince would bring many of them under his control, but they would again become independent when the sceptre passed into the hands of a weaker ruler.

The Bāro Bhuiyā.

These chiefs are well remembered in Assam legends as the "Bāro (twelve) Bhuiyā," a title which was formerly supposed to indicate a connection with the aboriginal tribe of the same designation in Chota Nagpur. This, of course, is not the case; and the late Dr. Wise has clearly shown,* in connection with Eastern Bengal, where there was also in former times a group of chiefs bearing the same title, that, in this connection, the word "Bhuyā" or "Bhuiyā" has nothing to do with caste, but is merely the Sanskrit equivalent of the Persian word "Zamindar." It is not clear why the number "twelve" should always be associated with them, both in Bengal and Assam. Whenever they are

* J. A. S. B., 1874, Pt. I, page 197; and 1875, Pt. I, page 181.

enumerated, twelve persons are always mentioned, but the actual names vary, just as in the case of the Muhammadan "Panch Pir," different saints are counted by different people. It seems to have been the practice in this part of India for kings to appoint twelve advisers or governors. Nar Nārāyan had twelve ministers of State; twelve chiefs or *dolois* administered the hilly portion of the Raja of Jaintia's Dominions, and there were twelve State Councillors in Nepal. The number may thus have become connected in the minds of the people with all dignitaries ranking next to a Raja, and so have come to be used in a purely conventional sense.

Varying accounts of them.

There are various stories regarding the Bāro Bhuiyā, but it would be useless to try and reconcile them; they often refer to entirely different groups of chiefs, and they are, to a great extent, mere legends. The Bhuiyās who were ruling north of the Brahmaputra and east of the Chutiya kingdom at the time when the Ahoms entered Assam claimed to be the descendants of Samudra, the minister of Arimatta who, it is said, seized the throne on the expulsion of Arimatta's son Ratna Singh. Samudra was succeeded by his son Manohar, and the latter's daughter Lakshmi gained the love of the Sun God, by whom she had two sons Santanu and Sāmanta. The former became a Vaishnava by sect and the latter a Sākta; they accordingly separated, Santanu and his sons going to Rāmpur in Nowgong, while Sāmanta remained at Lakshmipur, the place from which the modern district of Lakhimpur takes its name. His sons succeeded him there, and maintained their independence against the Kachāri king who then ruled in Central Assam and the Chutiya king of Sadiya. They were eventually defeated by the Ahoms, as will be narrated further on. One of Santanu's descendants named Rājdhar settled at Bardowa in Nowgong; and his son Kusambar was the father of the great religious reformer Sankar Deb.

In the *Guru Charitra*, and also in the *Sankara Charitra*, another version is given of the origin of the Bāro Bhuiyā of Nowgong. A Raja of Kāmatāpur, named Durlabh Nārāyan, went to war with another Raja named Dharma Nārāyan, who styled himself Gauresvar, or Lord of Gaur.

This title was often claimed by quite petty chiefs; and in the eighth and ninth centuries there were at times as many as six princelings in North Bengal all calling themselves Gauresvar simultaneously.* Gaur was also the ancient name of part of the modern district of Sylhet. It is thus impossible to say where Dharma Nārāyan ruled, but the story goes that when peace was concluded he sent seven families of Brāhmans and seven families of Kāyasths to Durlabh, who settled them on the frontier, as wardens of the marches, and gave them lands and slaves. The ablest of them was a Kāyasth named Chandibar, who became their leader. Their head-quarters were at Paimaguri, where they earned the gratitude of the people by erecting a bund. Subsequently the Bhutias raided and carried off a number of people, including the son of Chandibar, but the latter, with the other Bhuiyās, followed the raiders and rescued the captives. He subsequently settled at Bardowa in Nowgong, where his great-grandson Sankar Deb was born.

When the Koch kings rose to power they subdued a number of local chiefs who ruled the country between the Sankosh and the Bar Nadi, but these, though also called Bhuiyās, were not in any way connected with those whose traditional origin has been narrated above.

The Chutiyas of Sadiya.

The Chutiyas now number about a twelfth of a million, and are found chiefly in Lakhimpur and the adjacent part of Sibsāgar. Their language, which is still known to the Deoris, or priestly section of the tribe, is unmistakably Bodo, but their appearance suggests that they have in their frames a considerable infusion of Shān blood. They occupied a tract not far removed from the home of the Shāns, and the probability is that they absorbed considerable numbers of the earlier immigrants of that race, just as in more recent times they have intermarried with the Ahoms, to such an extent that, at the census of 1891, one-third of those who recorded their sub-tribe described themselves as Ahom-Chutiyas.

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* *Archæological Survey of India*. Vol. XV, page 111.

The Chutiyas have numerous traditions, all of which point to their having followed a Hindu dynasty in Sadiya, or Vidarbha. The said dynasty appears to have collapsed by a process of internal decay, leaving the people of Upper Assam split up into a number of small independent communities. The Chutiya legends are full of all sorts of impossible absurdities which it would be useless to repeat, and it is questionable how far even the main incidents, which are summarized below, represent real facts.*

The founder of the Chutiya kingdom is said to have been a chief named Bir Pāl, who claimed descent from the mythical Bhishmak, and ruled over sixty families on a hill called Sonagiri. His son, who is called in the legend Sonagiri Pāl, *alias* Gauri Nārāyan, brought under his yoke the Chutiyas on the neighbouring hills (Rangalgiri, Nilgiri, Chandragiri, etc.). He then turned his arms against a Raja named Bhadra Sen, who ruled in the plains, and defeated him, taking a large quantity of booty and many prisoners of various Hindu castes. He built a capital at Ratnapur and assumed the name Ratnadhvaj Pāl. Subsequently he subdued another chief named Nyāya Pāl and, it is alleged, marched to Kāmatāpur and compelled the Raja of that country to give him a daughter in marriage. He was followed by nine kings of his line, the eighth of whom, Dhir Nārāyan, had a daughter but no son. The girl married a Chutiya lad of low origin, who had beaten all his rivals in the contest prescribed for her hand. Dhir Nārāyan afterwards had a son named Sādhak, and while the boy was still a minor, he made his son-in-law regent and abdicated. The regent, who proved a very incompetent ruler, was attacked and killed by the Ahoms; but they spared the life of the young Raja and gave him an estate in Lower Assam, bounded on the north by the Kobirār Ali, on the south by the Brahmaputra, on the east by the Rota and on the west by the northern Dhansiri of Darrang. Thus far the legends. All that we really know is that Chutiya kings were reigning at

* A fuller account of one legend will be found in my *Report on Historical Research in Assam*, and two others are given in Mr. W. B. Brown's *Deori-Chutiya Grammar.*

Sadiya at the beginning of the thirteenth century, that there were frequent wars between them and the Ahoms, who finally overthrew them and subverted their kingdom in the early part of the sixteenth century. These events will be dealt with in the narrative of Ahom rule.

The religion of the Chutiyas was a curious one. They worshipped various forms of Kāli with the aid, not of Brāhmans, but of their tribal priests or Deoris. The favourite form in which they worshipped this deity was that of Kesāi Khāti, "the eater of raw flesh," to whom human sacrifices were offered. After their subjugation by the Ahoms, the Deoris were permitted to continue their ghastly rites; but they were usually given for the purpose, criminals who had been sentenced to capital punishment. Failing them, victims were taken from a particular clan, which in return was accorded certain privileges. The person selected was fed sumptuously, until he was in sufficiently plump condition to suit the supposed taste of the goddess, and he was then decapitated at the Copper Temple at Sadiya, or at some other shrine of the tribe. Human sacrifices were also formerly offered by the Tipperas, Kachāris, Koches, Jaintias and other Assam tribes,* and it is thus easy to see how they came to be regarded favourably by the Tāntrik sect of Hinduism which is believed to have had its origin in this corner of India.

Human Sacrifices.

The kingdom of Kāmata.

It remains to deal with the western part of the Brahmaputra valley, which in former times, as we have seen, was included in the ancient kingdom of Kāmarupa, whose western boundary was the Karatoya. At the period with which we are now dealing, the whole tract up to the Karatoya seems still, as a rule, to have formed a single kingdom, but the name had been changed from Kāmarupa to Kāmatā.† The Muhammadan historians sometimes speak as if the terms Kāmarupa and Kāmatā were synonymous

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* Further details will be found in my paper on *Human Sacrifices in Ancient Assam*, J. A. S. B., 1898, page 56.

† Shown as Comotay in the Map of India given in Blaev's *Theatrum Orbis Terrarum* (Amsterdam, 1650). In the *Bahāristan-i-Ghaibi* the Koch king Lakshmi Nārāyan, who ruled west of the Sankosh, is called the Raja of Kāmatā.

and applicable to one and the same country, but on other occasions they appear to regard them as distinct, and it would seem that at times the tracts east and west of the Sankosh owed allegiance to different rulers, just as they did in the latter days of Koch rule.

One of the legends of the Bāro Bhuiyā mentions Durlabh Nārāyan as a Raja of Kāmatā and, if it can be relied on, he would seem to have ruled, at the end of the thirteenth century, over the country between the Bar Nadi and the Karatoya. About the same time, mention is made in the Ahom *Buranjis* of a war between the Ahoms and the Kāmatā Raja, in which the latter was worsted and forced to give a daughter in marriage to the Ahom monarch. In the reign of the latter's successor, a Raja of Kāmatā intervened in a quarrel between him and his rebellious half-brother, who was a son of the Kāmatā princess, invaded his country and compelled him to agree to a reconciliation.

The Khen kings.

The only Kāmatā dynasty of which we have any connected account is that of the Khyān, or Khen, kings, whose last representative, Nilāmbar, was overthrown by Husain Shāh in 1498 A.D.

To what race the Khens belonged it is impossible to say. The great majority of them have now been absorbed in the ranks of other communities. The few who still retain the tribal name claim to be Kāyasths, and are said to betray in their physiognomy a considerable infusion of Aryan blood, but this was probably received after their rise to power, and affords no clue to their origin. The defeat of their last king by Husain Shāh is a historic fact. In other respects the traditions regarding them lack corroboration, but they are not, in their main features, improbable. It is said that the founder of the dynasty was a cowherd whose master, a Brāhman, is said to have foretold that he would become king, and helped him to overthrow the last degenerate descendant of the Pāl family. On ascending the throne he embraced the Hindu religion, assumed the name Niladhwaj and made his old master his chief *mantri* or minister. He is reputed to have imported many Brāhmans from Mithila. His capital was at Kāmatāpur, on the left bank of the Dharla, but he did not apparently exercise control over more than a very

small part of the old kingdom of Kāmarupa. Buchanan Hamilton who visited the ruins of Kāmatāpur, estimated its circumference at nineteen miles. The palace, as in the case of Burmese and Chinese towns, stood in the centre.

His son, Chakradhvaj, succeeded him, and the latter was in turn followed by his son Nilāmbar, who attained to great power and extended his rule, eastwards to the Bar Nadi and westwards as far as the Karatoya; he also included within his dominions the north-eastern part of the tract which had previously belonged to the Muhammadan rulers of Bengal. He did much to improve communications and, amongst other works, constructed a magnificent road from Kāmatāpur to Ghorāghat, a portion of which still forms part of the main road between Koch Bihār, Rangpur and Bogra.

Husain Shāh's conquest of Kāmatāpur.

According to tradition, the fall of Nilāmbar was in this wise:

The son of his Brāhman Councillor had an intrigue with the queen, and the king, hearing of it, caused him to be killed. He then invited the father to a banquet, and, after making him partake of his son's flesh, told him the whole story.* The Councillor at once left the kingdom, under the pretence of making a pilgrimage to the Ganges in order to wash away the sin committed by his son. But his real object was revenge. To obtain it, he went to Husain Shāh, the Muhammadan ruler at Gaur, and, telling him of the weakness of Nilāmbar's kingdom, persuaded him to send a large army to invade it. Husain Shāh laid siege to Kāmatāpur, but all his efforts to take it were frustrated. At last, it is said that he announced to the king his intention to return to his own country, but begged that before doing so his wife might be permitted to pay a visit to Nilāmbar's queen. By means of this subterfuge some armed men were introduced into the city in litters, and with their aid it was captured. Nilāmbar was taken prisoner, and it was intended to carry him to Gaur, but on the way he made his escape and was never heard of again. The capture of Kāmatāpur is generally assigned to the year 1498.

* Similar barbarities were perpetrated by the Ahom kings Sukāphā and Gadādhar Singh.

The Muhammadan accounts of Husain Shāh's invasion are very brief, but it appears that after sacking Kāmatāpur he reduced the country as far east as the Bar Nadi and left his son at Hājo as governor of the conquered territory. He celebrated his success by the erection of a Madrasah at Malda, the inscription of which bears a date corresponding to 1501–02 A.D. Some years later, an attempt was made to annex the Ahom country, and this led to the destruction of the entire Muhammadan army and the loss of the whole of the newly conquered territory.*

The Muhammadans are defeated by the Ahoms.

After the departure of the Muhammadans there was, for a time, no king of the whole country, which was ruled by a number of petty independent chiefs. Amongst others, two brothers named Madan and Chandan are said to have ruled at Marālāvās. This state of affairs continued for a few years and then the Koches under Biswa Singh made themselves masters of the country west of the Bar Nadi.

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* The war with the Ahoms is dealt with separately further on. I have not referred to the tradition of Ismail Ghāzi's alleged victory over the king of Kāmatāpur about 1460 A.D. (J. A. S. B., 1874, page 216) as it is wholly uncorroborated.

CHAPTER IV.

THE KOCH KINGS.

Racial affinities of the Koches.

At the present day the word Koch is a term of some ambiguity. In Assam Proper it has become the name of a Hindu caste, into which are received the converts to Hinduism from the ranks of the Kachāri, Lālung, Mikir and other tribes; and, as the process of conversion is still continuing, the number of persons described as Koch is increasing rapidly. In North Bengal and Goālpāra, on the other hand, it is a term which is falling into disrepute; and it has, to a great extent, been abandoned in favour of the appellation Rājbansi. It is here generally regarded as indicative of race, that is to say, as the name of a tribe and not a caste, but the ethnic character of the people so called has been a matter of some controversy. The Koches are frequently referred to as Kuvacha in the *Purāns* and *Tantras*. The historian of Muhammad Bakhtiyar Khilji's invasion at the end of the twelfth century says that the features of "the Koch, Mech and Thāru, tribes" resembled those of a tribe of Southern Siberia. That acute observer Bryan Hodgson classed the Koch with the Bodo and Dhimal, and the same view is taken by Buchanan and in the Dacca Blue Book. On the other hand, Colonel Dalton considered them to be Dravidian, and Risley, while admitting an intermixture with Mongoloid stock, held that Dravidian characteristics predominate. This divergence of views seems to have arisen from the confusion caused by the use of the term Rājbansi. It originally referred to an entirely distinct community of Dravidian affinities, but was afterwards adopted by the Koches west of the Monās river, who, when they attorned to Hinduism, appropriated the caste name of the most numerous Hinduized community in their neighbourhood. So long as the Koch kings ruled, there was a considerable intermingling of the two races in the country subject to their domination. There seems, however, to be no doubt that the true Koches were a Mongoloid race, very closely allied to the Meches and Gāros; and we find that in

Jalpaiguri, Koch Bihār and Goālpāra, the persons now known as Rājbansi are either pure Koches who, though dark, have a distinctly Mongoloid physiognomy, or else a mixed breed, in which the Mongoloid element usually preponderates. The Koch language is now practically extinct, but the traces of it which remain show that it was almost identical with Gāro. Ralph Fitch, who visited the Koch kingdom in the sixteenth century, says: "The people have ears which be marvelous great, of a span long, which they draw out by devices when they be young." This practice, though since abandoned by the Koches, is still common amongst the Gāros. In former times the Koches and Meches freely intermarried, but the conversion of the former to Hinduism has now caused the practice to be discontinued. East of the Monās, where there were no Rājbansis properly so-called, the Koches, as the dominant tribe, were admitted to Hinduism without any change of their tribal name, but members of other Mongoloid tribes who afterwards followed their example were allowed to do so only by sinking their old designation and joining the ranks of the already-Hinduized Koches.*

There are numerous old manuscripts which contain some account of the Koch kings, but by far the most detailed narrative yet brought to light is that contained in the *Bansābali* of the Darrang Rajas. This manuscript, which ends abruptly with the death of Parikshit, belonged to the late Raja Lakshmi Nārāyan Kuar, who was the leading representative of the Darrang branch of the Koch royal family.† It is written in metrical Assamese on oblong strips of *Sanchi* bark (*Aquilaria agallocha*), and is believed to have been compiled by a well-known Assamese writer in the year 1806. We have no means of tracing his sources of information; and, although at that time the memory of the

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* I have discussed this question more fully in the Assam Census Report for 1891, page 212, and in the Bengal Census Report for 1901, page 382. There is an excellent paper on the subject, by Babu Monmohan Roy, in the J. A. S. B. for 1903. Colonel Waddell's head measurements fully establish the predominance of the Mongoloid type in the Koches of Assam.

† An analysis of the contents of this *Bansābali* was given by me in the J. A. S. B., Vol. LXII. It has recently been printed. (Baptist Mission Press, Calcutta, 1917.)

events narrated must have been much fresher than it is now, there is clear internal evidence of a certain disregard of facts and of wild exaggeration, so that it is impossible to rely on the narrative as fully as on the *Buranjis* of the Ahoms. In the following account an endeavour has been made to eliminate the less probable portions of the story, but it must be clearly borne in mind that absolute credence cannot be given to any statement which is not confirmed by the testimony of Ahom or Muhammadan writers.

Bisva Singh.

The progenitor of the Koch kings was a Mech or Koch—it is not certain which—named Hāriya Mandal, a resident of Chikangrām, a village in the Khuntaghāt pargana of the Goālpāra district. He was recognized head of twelve leading families of Meches (or Koches) living in the pargana.* He married, it is said, two sisters named Hirā and Jirā, the daughters of one Hāju, by whom he had two sons, namely, Bisu the son of Hirā, and Sisu the son of Jirā. They were born some years before the conquest of Kāmatā by the Muhammadans under Husain Shāh. The latter did not retain a permanent hold on the country, and the people, left to themselves, split up into numerous petty principalities, each under its own chief. Bisu was a man of unusual enterprise and courage, and he soon forced his way to the front. He defeated the chiefs, or Bhuiyās, of Uguri and Luki, but was repulsed by Chāru Bhuiyā. Nothing daunted, he renewed his attack, at a time when the Bhuiyā's soldiers had dispersed for a festival, and killed him and the few followers that remained with him. Following up this success, he subdued the chiefs of Phulguri, Bijni and other places, and gradually extended his rule as far as the Karatoya in the west and the Bar Nadi in the east. He rose to power about 1515 A.D.

His conversion to Hinduism.

As usual in such cases, the Brāhmans soon sought him out. They discovered that his tribesmen were Kshatriyas who had thrown away their sacred threads when fleeing before the wrath of Parasurām, the son of the Brāhman

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* Their names are Pānbar, Phedela, Phedphedo, Barihana, Kathia, Guābar, Megha, Baisāgu, Jagai, Gurikata, Jugbar and Dakharu. These are, for the most part, common Bodo names.

ascetic Jamadagni, while Bisu himself was declared to be the son, not of the humble Hāriya Mandal, but of the God Siva who, assuming Hāriya's form, had had intercourse with his wife Hira, herself an incarnation of Siva's wife Pārbati. Bisu assumed the name of Bisva Singh, and his brother Sisu became Sib Singh, while many of his followers discarded their old tribal designation and called themselves Rājbansis.

Bisva Singh now became a great patron of Hinduism. He worshipped Siva and Durga, and gave gifts to the disciples of Vishnu and also to the priests and astrologers. He revived the worship of Kāmākhya, rebuilt her temple on the Nilāchal hill near Gauhāti, and imported numerous Brāhmans from Kanauj, Benares and other centres of learning.

Organization of his kingdom.

He moved his capital from Chikangrām to Koch Bihār, where he built a fine city. He made his brother Sisu, or Sib Singh, Jubrāj, and appointed twelve ministers of State from the twelve chief families of the Meches. He took a census of his subjects. He is said to have found that the number of able-bodied men capable of bearing arms was 5,225,000, but this is clearly an exaggeration. He divided off the people under various officers, *viz.*, *Thakurias* over 20 men, *Saikias* over 100, *Hazāris* over 1,000, *Umras* over 3,000 and *Nawābs* over 60,000. He is said to have possessed a large number of elephants, horses, asses, buffaloes and camels. He married a number of wives by whom he had eighteen sons, including Malla Deb, Sukladhvaj, Nar Singh and Gosāin Kamal.

Relations with Ahoms

Bisva Singh came into contact with the Ahoms, but the accounts differ as to what happened. According to the chronicles of the Koch kings, he undertook an invasion of Ahom territory, but had to retreat owing to the hardships experienced during the journey and the great difficulty of obtaining supplies. The Ahom chroniclers merely relate that in 1537 he paid a friendly visit to the Ahom king Suhungmung and exchanged presents with him.

Death.

Bisva Singh died about 1540. During his reign there were hostilities more than once between the Ahoms and the Muhammadans, who advanced up the Brahmaputra as far as Koliābar, and who, when finally defeated in 1532,

were pursued by the Ahoms as far as the Karatoya, but there is no reference to the subject in the records of Koch rule. The explanation may be that Bisva Singh's capital in Koch Bihār was far removed from the route taken by the Muhammadans and that, although he had defeated the local chiefs on both sides of the Brahmaputra as far east as the Bar Nadi, he had not at that time consolidated his rule and brought that part of the country under his direct administration. Or it may be that, not feeling strong enough to take his part in the war, he made no attempt to prevent the combatants from passing through his territory so long as they left him unmolested.

Nar Nārāyan.

At the time of Bisva Singh's death, his two eldest sons, Malla Deb and Sukladhvaj, were away at Benares, whither they had been sent to study under a learned Brāhman, and their brother Nar Singh, taking advantage of their absence, proclaimed himself king. As soon as the news reached them, Malla Deb and Sukladhvaj hastened home and, raising an army, defeated Nar Singh. He fled to Morang, the submontane tract west of Koch Bihār. On the Raja of that country refusing to give him up, his brothers marched against him and defeated him, whereupon Nar Singh fled again, first to Nepal and then to Kashmir. There are still in Koch Bihār some people called Morāngia who have a tradition that they were made over to Nar Nārāyan by the Raja of the Morang country.

It is said that Nar Singh subsequently became ruler of Bhutan, and, although there is no confirmation of this statement, the occurrence is not altogether impossible. It has already been mentioned that in ancient times Bhutan seems, occasionally at least, to have formed part of the kingdom of Kāmarupa. The historian of Mir Jumlah's invasion in the middle of the seventeenth century says that the people of that country then spoke a dialect allied to that of the Koches. And in his Report on his mission to Bhutan, the late Sir Ashley Eden said: "Apparently the Bhutias have not possessed Bhutan for more than two centuries; it formerly belonged to a tribe called by the Bhutias Tephu; they are generally believed to have been people of Koch Bihār. The Tephu were driven down into the plains by

some Tibetan soldiers, who had been sent from Lhassa to look at the country."*

After expelling Nar Singh, Malla Deb ascended the throne and assumed the name Nar Nārāyan.† He appointed his brother Sukladhvaj to be his Commander-in-Chief. In this capacity Sukladhvaj displayed such dash and rapidity of movement that he was nicknamed Chilarai, or the Kite king.

War with Ahoms.

Nar Nārāyan soon came into conflict with the Ahoms. The cause of the quarrel is uncertain. According to one authority, the Ahom king Suklenmung was the aggressor. A petty chief, or Bhuiyā, conspired, it is said, against Nar Nārāyan and, on detection, fled to Suklenmung, who gave him shelter and made an unsuccessful attack on the Koch king. However that may be, in 1546 an expedition under Sukladhvaj ascended the north bank of the Brahmaputra as far as the Dikrai river, where a battle took place. The Koches, who were armed with bows and arrows, succeeded in killing some of the Ahom leaders, whereupon the common soldiers fled and were pursued with great slaughter. A less decisive action was fought soon afterwards at Koliābar, on the opposite side of the Brahmaputra. The Ahoms subsequently took up a position at Salā, but were attacked by the Koches and defeated with great loss.

Construction of Gosāin Kamala Ali.

In the course of these operations, the Koches constructed an embanked road the whole way from their capital in Koch Bihār to Nārāyanpur, in the south-west of what is now the North Lakhimpur subdivision, a distance of some 350 miles. The work was carried out under the supervision of Gosāin Kamal, the king's brother; parts of it are still in existence and are known to this day as " Gosāin Kamal's road."

* *Political Missions to Bhutan*, p. 108. The first syllable of Tephu may perhaps be the Bodo *Ti* or *Di* meaning water, which occurs also in "Dimāsā," the tribal designation of the Bodos of North Cachar.

† In some of the old religious writings he is called Malla Nārāyan. In Blochmann's paper on Koch Bihār and Assam he is called Bāl Gosāin, but the proper reading should be Māl Gosāin, as in Dowson's Elliot's History of India, Vol. VI, p. 591. Malku Sāin on p. 331 of Blochmann's translation of the Ain (Vol. I) is clearly meant for Māl Gosāin.

The Koches are defeated.

This great undertaking was completed in 1547 and the Koches then erected a fort at Nārāyanpur. Suklenmung struck in behind them and entrenched himself on the bank of the Pichala river. He thus cut off their supplies and forced them to assume the offensive. The result was a disastrous defeat for the Koches. Many were slain in the assault and a large number of fugitives were subsequently surrounded and killed.

But renew the war and gain the victory.

This decisive defeat led to a cessation of hostilities for some years, but in 1562 a fresh attempt was made by Nar Nārāyan to overcome his powerful rival. According to one of the Ahom *Buranjis* this war arose out of a dispute in connection with Nar Nārāyan's invasion of the Kachāri country, referred to below, in the course of which he is said to have devastated some villages inside the Ahom frontier. A force was sent up the Brahmaputra in boats as far as the mouth of the Dikhu, where an engagement took place in which the Ahoms appear to have been worsted. In the following January the redoubtable Chilarai himself took the field with a large force and, in a second engagement near the Dikhu, inflicted an overwhelming defeat on the Ahoms. Their king and his chief nobles fled to Charaikharang in Nāmrup, and the Koches entered their capital Garghaon, in triumph. Some months later the Ahom Raja sued for terms, and peace was concluded on the following conditions, *viz.*, the acknowledgment of the Koch suzerainty, the delivery of a number of sons of the chief nobles as hostages, and the payment of an indemnity, consisting of sixty elephants, sixty pieces of cloth and a quantity of gold and silver.

War with Kachāris.

The Ahoms were not the only nation defeated by Nar Nārāyan. He sent an expedition against the Kachāris, who were easily overcome. Their king, it is said, made his submission and, in addition to giving eighty-four elephants and other presents, agreed to pay an annual tribute of seventy thousand rupees, one thousand gold mohars and sixty elephants.

Submission of Manipur Raja.

Messengers were sent to the Raja of Manipur calling on him to submit and pay tribute, and the Raja, feeling himself too weak to oppose so powerful a prince, at once complied with the requisition. His tribute was fixed at twenty

thousand rupees, three hundred gold mohars and ten elephants.

The kingdom of Jaintia was next attacked and, in the battle that followed, the Raja was killed by Chilarai with his own hand. His son was placed on the throne after promising to pay regular tribute. It is said that one of the conditions imposed on him was that he should not in future strike coins in his own name. This story receives some confirmation from the fact that, until the year 1731, no king of Jaintia appears to have recorded his name on the coins minted by him · on all known coins of earlier date, as on most of the later ones also, the words "ruler of Jaintia" are used instead of the Raja's name.

Victories over Jaintia, Tippera and Sylhet kings.

Chilarai, it is said, then proceeded to wage war against the Raja of Tippera, who was vanquished and put to death. His son was set up in his place and undertook to pay tribute to the extent of ten thousand rupees, one hundred gold mohars and thirty horses. There is no mention of this war in the Tippera chronicles, and the only corroboration of the Koch *Bansābali* is found in an Assamese *Buranji* of uncertain date. This is not sufficient to establish it as an historical fact.

The Sylhet king, it is alleged, was also defeated and slain, and his brother Asurai, who was nominated to succeed him, was fain to promise a tribute of a hundred elephants, two hundred horses, three lakhs of rupees and ten thousand gold mohars. This campaign, like the preceding one, lacks confirmation. Nor is it quite clear what part of Sylhet is referred to. The open country in the centre of the district was conquered by the Muhammadans at the end of the fourteenth century, but it may have been temporarily independent at this period which was a troublous one in Bengal.

Submission of chiefs of Khairam and Dimarua.

Viryavanta, the chief of Khairam, seeing the fate of the surrounding Rajas, is said to have voluntarily made his submission. His tribute was fixed at fifteen thousand rupees, nine hundred gold mohars, fifty horses and thirty elephants. It was also stipulated that he should in future put the name of Nar Nārāyan on his coins, the sign of a mace being added to distinguish them from those of the Koch king's own mint.

No specimens of these coins are now forthcoming. As there are some grounds for believing that Nar Nārāyan defeated the Kachāris and Jaintias, there seems no reason to doubt that he obtained the voluntary submission of the chief of Khairam, who was less powerful, and whose country was equally accessible.

According to some accounts, Panthesvar, the Raja of Dimarua, was another victim of Nar Nārāyan's invincible general, but others say that he was formerly a tributary of the Kachāris who sought and obtained Nar Nārāyan's protection from their oppression, and was established by him as warden of the marches in the direction of Jaintia.

War with Padshah of Gaur.

So far Nar Nārāyan had been everywhere successful. But it was now his turn to succumb to a stronger enemy than any he had yet encountered. This was the Padshah of Gaur. There is very little authentic information about the war, but according to the chronicles of the Koch kings, Nar Nārāyan was the aggressor. His army under Chilarai was defeated, and the latter himself was taken prisoner. The Muhammadans ascended the Brahmaputra as far as Tezpur, but they made no attempt to take permanent possession of the country, and returned to Bengal after demolishing the temples at Kāmākhya, Hājo and other places. All local traditions point to the redoubtable Brāhman renegade and iconoclast, Kālā Pāhār, as the leader of the Muhammadan army, and his name is so widely known in Assam as the destroyer of Hindu images and temples that it seems barely possible that there can be any mistake. Kālā Pāhār was the general of Sulaimān Kararāni, who ruled in Bengal from 1563 to 1572 A.D., and the invasion referred to in the local traditions is doubtless the same as that mentioned in the *Riyāz-us-Salātin.** According to this authority, Sulaimān Kararāni set out for the conquest of the Koch kingdom in 1568 A.D. He had subjugated the outlying parts and was besieging the capital when he heard of an insurrection in Orissa, and so abandoned the siege. It is said in the local *Buranjis* that Chilarai was taken prisoner to Gaur. He was kept in captivity for some time, but, having gained the favour

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* Abdus Salām's translation, page 151.

of the Padshah's wife, he eventually obtained his freedom and returned home. According to one account he married the Padshah's daughter, and received as her dowry the parganas of Bahirband, Bhitarband, Gayabāri, Sherpur and Daskaunia, *i.e.*, the riparian portions of Rangpur and North Mymensingh.

Release of Ahom hostages.

Nar Nārāyan now became anxious for a good understanding with the Ahoms. He accordingly determined to release Sundar Gohāin and the other hostages taken from them in 1562. In order to conceal his real motive he resorted to the device of playing at dice with Sundar Gohāin. After losing heavily, he staked the release of the hostages on the result of the next throw, which he also lost, and thereupon sent them back with numerous presents and a friendly letter to the Ahom monarch.

Fresh hostilities with the Padshah of Gaur.

Some years afterwards it is narrated that Nar Nārāyan assisted Akbar in his attack on the "Padshah of Gaur." Chilarai invaded his kingdom from the east, while the Imperial army advanced upon him from the west. The Padshah was easily defeated and his kingdom was divided between the Koch king and the Emperor of Delhi. This is the story told in the local *Bansābalis*, but no mention is made of any assistance from the Koches, in the Musalman accounts of the defeat of Dāud by Khān Jahān in 1576 A.D., to which the story appears to refer.

In 1578, according to the *Ain-i-Akbari*, Nar Nārāyan "renewed his demonstration of obedience to the Imperial throne" and sent 54 elephants and other valuable presents to Akbar.

Chilarai's death and dismemberment of Koch kingdom.

In the course of the second expedition against the Muhammadans, Chilarai was attacked by small-pox and died on the banks of the Ganges. He left a son, named Raghu Deb, whom he commended to his brother's care. From the time of Chilarai's death there were, it is said, no more wars, and the prosperity of the people grew apace. In the Ahom *Buranjis*, however, a rebellion is said to have occurred in 1577, headed by three men named Bar Dado, Gabha Naik and Bar Katu. They were defeated and fled with 14,000 of their followers to Ahom territory, and were given refuge and settled at Gajala. According to the *Akbarnāmah*, Nar

Nārāyan lived the life of an ascetic and did not marry till late in life. He at last did so, on the urgent representations of his brother Chilarai, and in due course he had a son. After Chilarai's death, the latter's son Raghu Deb, who had previously been regarded as the heir to the throne, began to fear lest he should be ousted from the succession. His disaffection was fanned by some of his father's old followers; and at last, under the pretence of making a journey, he collected his family and all his adherents and proceeded to Barnagar on the Monās river, near which he erected a fort which he called Ghilajaypur. The site is now covered with forest growth, but numerous fruit trees and tanks are still to be seen there.* Nar Nārāyan sent men to recall him, but he refused to return. At last, rather than go to war with his own nephew, the peace-loving monarch agreed to divide the kingdom, keeping the portion west of the Sankosh for himself and his successors, and giving up to Raghu Deb the tract east of that river; on his side Raghu agreed to pay tribute, to acknowledge his uncle as his overlord and to strike coins only in the latter's name. This was in 1581 A.D. Muhammadan writers refer to the two kingdoms as Koch Bihār and Koch Hājo respectively; the former name of course still survives, but the only trace of the latter is in the town called Hājo, a few miles north of Gauhāti.

Soon afterwards a quarrel broke out, but the accounts vary, both as to the cause of it, and as to the manner in which it was settled. According to some, Raghu made a raid on certain villages in his uncle's territory, while others allege that his failure to pay the tribute which he had agreed to give was the cause of the dispute. It is said by some that a battle was fought in which Raghu was defeated, and by others, that he submitted without hazarding an engagement, on seeing the strength of the army sent against him.

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* After the overthrow of the Koch kings an Ahom official called the Barnagaria Barua lived there. He was killed by the Burmese after, it is said, throwing his treasure into a small tank which is now silted up.

Nar Nārāyan died in 1584* after a reign of nearly fifty years. In his time the power of the Koch kings reached its zenith, but this was due to the energy and skill of his brother Chilarai, rather than to any efforts of his own. He was a man of a mild and studious disposition, and seems to have been more addicted to religious exercises and conversation with learned men than to the conduct of State affairs. In all questions of politics Chilarai seems to have possessed an overwhelming influence; and he was the moving spirit in every adventure. As soon as he died, the din of warlike preparations ceased and peace reigned in the land.

Nar Nārāyan's death. Character.

Nar Nārāyan greatly encouraged religion. He rebuilt the temple of Kāmākhya which the Muhammadans had destroyed, and imported learned Brāhmans from Bengal to conduct the religious ceremonies. The temple contains two stone figures, which are said to be representations of Nar Nārāyan and his brother Chilarai or Sukladhvaj. It also contains the following inscription:—

Rebuilding of Kāmākhya temple.

> "Glory to the king Malla Deb, who by virtue of his mercy, is kind to the people, who in archery is like Arjun, and in charity like Dadhichi and Karna; he is like an ocean of all goodness, and he is versed in many *sāstras*; his character is excellent; in beauty he is as bright as Kandarpa, he is a worshipper of Kāmākhya. His younger brother Sukladeb built this temple of bright stones on the Nila hillock, for the worship of the goddess Durgā, in 1487 Sak (1565 A.D.). His beloved brother Sukladhvaj again, with universal fame, the crown of the greatest heroes, who, like the fabulous Kalpataru, gave all that was devoutly asked of him, the chief of all devotees of the goddess, constructed this beautiful temple with heaps of stones on the Nila hill in 1487 Sak."

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* This is the date given in the late Prasiddha Nārāyan's *Bansābali* and by Gunābhirām, and I have accepted it in the absence of definite proof that it is wrong. But the dates on his son's coins and on those of Raghu Deb, who declared his independence on Nar Nārāyan's death (1587 and 1588, respectively), afford grounds for thinking that the correct date may be three years later.

Tāntrik Hinduism.

At this time Sāktism was the predominant form of Hinduism in this part of India, where in fact it is believed by many to have had its origin. Its adherents base their observances on the *Tantras*, a series of religious works in which the various ceremonies, prayers and incantations are prescribed in a dialogue between Siva and his wife Pārbati. The fundamental idea is the worship of the female principle, the procreative power of nature as manifested by personified desire. It is a religion of bloody sacrifices from which even human beings were not exempt. In the *Kālika Purān* it is stated that a man without blemish is the most acceptable sacrifice that can be offered, and the manner in which the victim is to be dealt with is laid down in great detail. When the new temple of Kāmākhya was opened, the occasion was celebrated by the immolation of no less than a hundred and forty men, whose heads were offered to the Goddess on salvers made of copper. Similar sacrifices were offered to various aboriginal deities. According to the *Haft Iqlim* there was in Kāmarupa a class of persons called *Bhogis*, who were voluntary victims of a Goddess named Ai who dwelt in a cave; from the time when they announced that the Goddess had called them, they were treated as privileged persons; they were allowed to do whatever they liked, and every woman was at their command; but when the annual festival came round they were killed. Magic also held an important place in the estimation of the people, and in the *Ain-i-Akbari* they were accused, among other practices, of divination by the examination of a child cut out of the body of "a pregnant woman who has gone her full term of months."

The Vaishnava revival of Sankar Deb.

It was impossible that such practices would be allowed to continue indefinitely, and Nar Nārāyan's reign is remarkable for the Vaishnava reformation inaugurated by Sankar Deb, a Kāyasth of Batadroba in Nowgong. He is said to have been born in 1449 and to have died in 1569. The latter date is probably correct, in which case the former is possibly thirty or forty years too early. Sankar Deb preached a purified Vishnuism and inculcated the doctrine of salvation by faith and prayer rather than by sacrifices. He at first attempted to propagate his views in Ahom territory,

but he was subjected to so much persecution, owing to the enmity of the Brāhmans who had the king's ear, that he went to Barpeta, where, under the mild and just rule of Nar Nārāyan, he proclaimed the new faith far and wide. The king himself is alleged to have had many interviews with him; and some say that he even wished to become his disciple, but that the great reformer refused this honour. It is said by some that Nar Nārāyan married Sankar Deb's niece Kamala Priya, but others aver that it was Chilarai who did so.

Origin of various Vaishnava Gosāins.

Sankar Deb had appointed as his successor another Kāyasth named Mādhab Deb. but, on his death, this nomination was not universally accepted, and several of his Brāhman disciples seceded and formed separate sects of their own. The chief of these "Bāmunia Gosāins" were Deb Dāmodar, Hari Deb and Gopāl Deb, who founded numerous *sattras*, or religious centres. The most important are those at Auniāti, Dakhinpāt, Garumur and Kuruā Bāhi on the Mājuli. Amongst his own followers, Mādhab attained even a greater repute than the founder of the sect; he was himself more of an ascetic than the latter, but he permitted greater laxity to his followers, who are known as Mahāpurushias and still regard Barpeta as their head-quarters. The Bāmunia Gosāins had one Sudra rival in Upper Assam in the person of Anirodh, a Kalita by caste. This man quarrelled with Sankar Deb and, leaving him, founded the Moāmariā sect, the adherents of which were destined to play an important part in the downfall of Ahom rule. They were mainly persons of low social rank, such as Doms, Morāns, Kachāris, Hāris and Chutiyas; and, as they denied the supremacy of the Brāhmans, they were naturally the special aversion of the orthodox Hindu hierarchy. Their designation is said to be a nickname given to the original disciples of Anirodh, who lived near a lake, where they caught large numbers of the fish called "Moā." It may also perhaps be connected with the circumstance that Anirodh is reputed to have owned a celebrated book on magic or Māyā.

Prevalence of aboriginal beliefs.

It must not be imagined from the foregoing remarks that Hinduism had become the universal religion in the Brahmaputra valley. This was by no means the case. The

great mass of the Kachāri, Rābhā, Lālung and other aboriginal tribes still held to their old tribal beliefs, just as do some of them even to the present day. No pressure was put upon them to change their creed; and it is recorded that Nar Nārāyan issued an edict setting aside the tract north of the Gosāin Kamala Ali for the practice of aboriginal forms of worship. Before starting on his expedition against the Ahoms he made special arrangements for the performance by his Kachāri soldiers of their tribal rites on the banks of the Sankosh river.

Encouragement of learning.

Nar Nārāyan was a great patron of learning, and some of the best-known Assamese writings date from his reign. Many Vaishnava hymns and homilies were written by Sankar Deb and Mādhab Deb; Purushottam Bidyabāgish compiled a grammar; and Ananta Kandali translated the *Bhāgavat* and other books into Assamese.

Construction of roads, etc.

Nar Nārāyan executed many useful public works. The construction of the Kamala Ali has already been mentioned. He made many other roads, and planted trees along them. He also erected several temples and caused numerous tanks to be dug. There is a tradition that he straightened the Brahmaputra near Pāndunāth, where it had previously run a very circuitous course. In 1636 the branch of that river which formerly flowed past Hājo is said by contemporary Muhammadan writers to have dried up, and we may perhaps conjecture that this was in consequence of the gradual enlargement of the channel cut by this king more than half a century before. Nar Nārāyan had a mint, and coins bearing his name, dated 1477 Sak (1555 A.D.) are still in existence.*

English traveller's account of the country.

Ralph Fitch visited the country during this reign and gives the following account of it:—

I went from Bengala into the country of Couch (Koch) or Quichen which lies 25 days' journey northwards

* See my *Note on some Coins of the Koch Kings*, Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal for 1895, Part I, and Stapleton's *Contributions to the History and Ethnography of N. E. India*, Ib., 1910, page 153. Stapleton points out that Nar Nārāyan's coin is modelled on that of Husain Shah of Bengal whose dynasty came to an end in 1538 A.D.

A coin of Parikshit has recently been found, dated 1525 *Sak*, equivalent to 1603 A.D.

> from Tanda. The king is a Gentile (Hindu); his name is Suckel Counse (Sukla Koch or Sukladhvaj); his country is great and lieth not far from Cauchin China; for they say they have pepper from thence. The port is called Cacchegate (Chichakot). All the country is set with bamboos or canes made sharp at both ends and driven into the earth, and they can let in the water and drown the ground above knee-deep, so that men nor horses can pass. They poison all the waters if any wars be. Here they have much silk and musk, and cloth made of cotton. The people have ears which he marvelous great, of a span long, which they draw out in length by devices while they be young. There they be all Gentiles, and they will kill nothing. They have hospitals for sheep, goats, dogs, cats, birds and for all living creatures. When they be old and lame they keep them until they die. If a man catch or buy any quick thing in other places and bring it thither, they will give him money for it, or other victuals, and keep it in their hospitals or let it go. They will give meat to the ants. Their small money is almonds, which often times they use to eat.

The statement that Sukladhvaj was the Raja probably shows merely the extent to which the real power vested in him. There is, however, a tradition that, owing to the alleged discovery by his astrologers that he was under the influence of Saturn, Nar Nārāyan placed the conduct of affairs entirely in his brother's hands for a whole year and wandered about in disguise, and it may be that Ralph Fitch visited the country at this juncture. The story is not intrinsically improbable, and it has a counterpart in Ahom history in the case of Raja Sib Singh, who endeavoured to avert a similar omen by installing his Rānis in turn as the nominal rulers of his kingdom.

It is difficult to explain the statements made by this traveller regarding the great tenderness shown by the people for animal life. It is far from being one of their peculiarities at the present day, and it may be presumed that the state of things described was due solely to the personal action of

Nar Nārāyan himself, who was, as we have already seen, open to all sorts of religious influences, and may well have been induced by some Jain or Vaishnava ascetic to open hospitals for animals and to inculcate the principles here referred to.

Raghu Deb

We have seen that Raghu Deb was given the portion of Nar Nārāyan's kingdom that lay east of the Sankosh river. He thus ruled the country now included in the Mangaldai subdivision and the districts of Kāmrup and Goālpāra; his dominions stretched southwards from the Goālpāra boundary, and included the country between the old course of the Brahmaputra and the Gāro hills which now forms the eastern part of Mymensingh.

War with Isā Khan.

Raghu was not destined to hold this latter tract long An Afghan named Isā Khān, the Bhuiyā of Khizrpur, near Nārāyanganj in Dacca, was already a powerful chief in the time of Dāud. When the latter was overthrown by Khān Jahān, Isā Khān became the leader of the Afghans throughout the eastern part of Bengal, and at one time he ruled the whole country from Ghorāghāt to the sea. He was defeated by Shahbāz Khān in 1583 and fled by ship to Chittagong. He there collected a body of troops, and, with their aid, he proceeded to carve out for himself a new kingdom. Encouraged, no doubt, by the dismemberment of the Koch dominions, he selected for his first operations the southern outlying portion of the tract assigned by Nar Nārāyan to his rebellious nephew. Raghu endeavoured to resist the invaders in person, and occupied a fort where the village of Jangalbāri in Mymensingh now stands. It was surrounded by a moat, but the defenders were not able to hold it against the vigorous onslaught of Isā Khān and his men. Raghu himself escaped by a tunnel while the assault was in progress. Following up his victory Isā Khān took from the Koches the whole country as far as Rangamati in the Goālpāra district. This invasion is not referred to in any of the local *Bansābalis*, but it is mentioned by several Muhammadan writers.*

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* *Cf.* Wise, *On the Bārah Bhuiyās of Eastern Bengal* (J. A. S. B., 1874, p. 213), and Blochmann's translation of the *Ain*, p. 343.

Raghu Deb rebuilt the Manikut or Hayagrib temple at Hājo, which had been destroyed by Kālā Pāhār, and endowed it with grants of land. When it was completed, it was consecrated by the sacrifice of numerous human victims. The following is a translation of an inscription inside this temple:— Rebuilding of temple at Hājo.

"There was a ruler of the earth named Bisva Singh; his illustrious son, the most wise king Malla Deb, was the conqueror of all enemies. In gravity and liberality and for heroism he had a great reputation, and he was purified by religious deeds. After him was born his brother Sukladhvaj, who subdued many countries. The son of this Sukladhvaj was king Raghu Deb, who was like the greatest man of the Raghu race: his glories spread out in all directions; the lord of Kāmarupa, in obedience to the order of destiny, is the slayer of the wicked, who was like water to the flames of the fire of sorrow of the vast populace. Of the seed of Sukladhvaj, a king was born of the name of Raghu Deb, who consoles innumerable persons and is a worshipper of the feet of Krishna; the king coming of age had a temple built on the hillock called Mani hillock in 1505 Sak (1583 A.D.). The most skilled and efficient artisan Sridhar himself built it."

On Nar Nārāyan's death, his son Lakshmi Nārāyan ascended the throne of the western Koch kingdom, which included Koch Bihār and parts of Dinājpur, Jalpaiguri and Rangpur. Raghu Deb now declared himself independent. He struck coins in his own name,* and refused to continue to pay tribute. Lakshmi Nārāyan was not in a position to force him to submit, and so resorted to underhand means. At his instigation Raghu's son Parikshit rebelled against him, Raghu's son rebels.

Isā Khān was brought under subjection to Akbar when Raja Mān Singh was Governor of Bengal.

In Muhammadan times *Sarkār* Ghorāghāt was the northern frontier district skirting Koch Bihār, and comprising portions of the modern districts of Dinājpur, Rangpur and Bogra.

* The only extant coins of Raghu Deb are dated 1510 Sak or 1588 A.D. Lakshmi Nārāyan had struck coins a year previously.

but the rising was unsuccessful. Parikshit was thrown into prison and his confederates were hanged. After a time he escaped and fled to Lakshmi Nārāyan who received him cordially.

Raghu's death.

Raghu Deb died about the year 1603 A.D., either from snake-bite, or of poison administered by the mother of his second son, Indra Nārāyan.†

Parikshit.

On his death, the mother of Indra Nārāyan endeavoured to place her son on the throne, but the chief ministers objected and sent word to Parikshit, who lost no time in hastening to the capital and assuming the sovereignty. His first act was to order the execution of his brother Indra Nārāyan. Mān Singh, the latter's uterine brother, fled to Ahom territory, where he was given protection and an honourable position. Parikshit removed his capital to North Gauhāti and built a palace near the Asvakrānta hill.

Quarrel with Lakshmi Nārāyan.

Like his father, Parikshit refused to acknowledge the supremacy of Lakshmi Nārāyan. There is said to have been a short war between the two countries in which Lakshmi Nārāyan was worsted. Both kings sought the friendship of the Ahoms, and in 1608, Parikshit gave his daughter Mangal Dāhi to Pratāp Singh. The Ahoms, however, were involved in wars with the Kachāris and abstained from all interference in Koch affairs.

Meanwhile Lakshmi Nārāyan had turned his attention to the Muhammadans, and, in 1596, he had declared himself a vassal of the Mughal Empire. In the *Akbarnāmah* it is said of him that he "has 4,000 horse and 200,000 foot, 700 elephants and 1,000 ships. His country is 200 *kos* long and from 100 to 40 *kos* broad, extending in the east to the Brahmaputra, in the north to Tibet, in the south to Ghorāghāt and in the west to Tirhut." In 1597 he gave a daughter in

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† I have taken 1603 as the date of Raghu Deb's death, as that is the year in which the coins of his successor Parikshit were issued. The date (1593) given by Gunabhiram and in Prasiddha Nārāyan's *Bansābali* must in any case be wrong, as an old cannon in the possession of the Raja of Gauripur bears an inscription recording its manufacture by Raghu Deb in 1519 *Sak*, or 1597 A.D. This cannon and another with a similar inscription but dated five years earlier, were found about a century ago in the bed of a river. (J. A. S. B., 1911 p. 43).

marriage to Raja Mān Singh, at that time the governor of Bengal. Soon afterwards, the latter sent a detachment into Koch Bihār to protect him, but the quarter from which an attack was threatened is not stated.

The Muhammadans intervene. The friction between the cousins continued to increase, and at last, in 1612, Lakshmi Nārāyan went in person to Dacca and begged the Nawāb to intervene. At the same time Raghunāth, Raja of Shushang, near Karaibari, complained of Parikshit's treatment of him. The Nawāb, Shekh Alāuddin Fathpuri Islām Khān, was glad of the opportunity to humble a Raja who had always prided himself on his independence, and despatched Mukarram Khān to invade Koch Hājo with 300 elephants, 6,000 horse, 10,000 to 12,000 foot and 400 or 500 warships.* Near Sālguna a naval engagement took place, in which Parikshit's fleet of 300 boats was annihilated. Thence the expedition proceeded by land. The vanguard was commanded by Shaikh Kamal, who marched quickly but cautiously to Hātsilah in the Karaibari pargana, fortifying his encampments with bamboo palisades, according to the custom in that part of the country. He then laid siege to Dhubri, where Parikshit had erected a fort which he held with a garrison of 500 horse and 10,000 foot. An attempt to take it by storm was unsuccessful. Regular siege works were then constructed and at the end of a month the garrison fled. Parikshit sent an envoy to sue for peace; and, in addition to presents to the local commander, paid an indemnity of 100 elephants, 100 ponies and 20 maunds of lignum aloes. The governor of Bengal was informed of this, but sent back word that Parikshit must make his submission in person and cede the whole of his country.

Capture and death of Parikshit. Parikshit now asked the Ahoms to come to his assistance. They consented, on condition that he sent all his available

* This invasion and the subsequent operations are described in the *Pādishāhnāmah*, and also in the *Bahāristān-i-Ghaibi*, a contemporary record of events in Bengal during the reign of Jahangir, to whom it was dedicated by the author. I am indebted to Professor Jadunāth Sarkar for a translation of the relevant portions of the latter work. It is there stated that before the invasion described in the text, Islam Khan had sent an expedition against Parikshit under the command of Abdul Wahid, who suffered a severe defeat.

forces to join the Ahom army, but he was unwilling to do this, and elected to carry on the contest alone. The Muhammadans halted at Dhubri for the *Ramazān* (month of fasting), but hearing that Lakshmi Nārāyan, who in accordance with his promise had invaded Parikshit's territory, was being hard pressed by the latter, Mukarram Khan sent a force under Sattrajit to his assistance. Parikshit was forced to retire, and took up a position on the Gadadhar river, a day's march from Dhubri. The Bengal auxiliaries cut off his supplies by blockading the mouth of this river. Parikshit, rendered desperate, sent his son-in-law, Dumria, against them, with a naval force, while he himself set out for a night attack on Dhubri. Dumria was entirely successful, capturing 250 warboats and inflicting heavy losses on the garrison of a fort which had been constructed by the blockaders. But Parikshit himself suffered unexpected delays and did not reach Dhubri till long after daylight. The Mughals were then ready for him. A battle raged all day without any decisive result, and at night Parikshit withdrew to his former position. The Mughals followed him and he continued his retreat across the Sankosh* to Barnagar on the Monās. Lakshmi Nārāyan joined in the pursuit. Parikshit's fleet was defeated. He escaped to Pându, but realizing that his case was hopeless, he surrendered himself, his elephants and all his possessions. He was taken to Dacca, whence he was sent, under the Mughal Emperor's orders, to Delhi. According to local accounts, Jahāngir agreed to restore him to his kingdom, on his undertaking to pay a sum of four lakhs of rupees, and he actually started to return, but fell ill and died on the journey.

The Mughals annex Parikshit's kingdom.

His dominions, as far as the Bar Nadi, were annexed to the Delhi empire and Mukarram Khān's brother was left in command of the Mughal garrison, which was at first stationed at Khelah. On his death, in 1616, Mukarram Khān himself was appointed governor, and moved the head-quarters to Hājo. Several Muhammadan notables were given estates

* This must be the smaller Sankosh which flows into the Brahmaputra, east of Dhubri.

in the conquered country, and 10,000 to 12,000 pāiks, or soldiers armed with shields and swords, were sent up from Bengal and provided with land in return for military service.

But fail to consolidate their power.

But the Koches were by no means prepared to accept Mughal domination. They rose under various leaders and inflicted several defeats on Mughal detachments on both banks of the Brahmaputra. Reinforcements were sent up from Bengal, and some success had been obtained, when dissensions broke out among the Muhammadan commanders. On the defeat of Parikshit, his brother Bali Nārāyan* had fled to the Ahom king, Pratāp Singh, who gave him shelter. This and other causes of offence led the governor of Bengal to decide on the invasion of the Ahom country, which will be described in Chapter VI. On hearing that Aba Baqar had been appointed to the command of the invading force, Abdus Salam and several high officers at Hājo left their posts in disgust. Mirza Sahin, however, with the aid of Lakshmi Nārāyan, captured one of the Koch leaders, but another, named Sanātan besieged the Muhammadan revenue collector. Abdul Bāqi was ordered to go from Kelah to his assistance, and advanced by river, while Mirza Sahin marched by land. After capturing a Koch fort on Kāwarhada hill, on the bank of the Brahmaputra, Abdul Bāqi was held up at Barnagar until Sahin arrived to support him. He then established himself at Hājo. In the desultory fighting which followed, the Mughals were gradually gaining the upper hand when news arrived of the annihilation of Aba Baqar's army. A naval force was sent up the Brahmaputra but rescued less than two thousand who had fled from the field of battle.

Bali *alias* Dharma Nārāyan.

Bali Nārāyan was installed by the victorious Ahoms as tributary raja of Darrang, and was renamed by them Dharma Nārāyan. Three thousand Chutiyas were at the same time sent from Upper Assam and settled as pāiks in the Mangaldai sub-division. Dharma Nārāyan crossed the Bar Nadi and invaded Kāmrup, while Sanātan made an

* Called Baldeo or Baladeb in the Muhammadan accounts.

attack on the garrison at Barnagar. The Muhammadans repelled both these attacks, but they were at once called upon to face a rising on the south bank where "the 18 hill rajas" declared their independence and built a stockade at Râni, a few miles south-west of Gauhāti. They attacked Sahin, who was encamped at Pāndu, but were defeated after a severe struggle. A few days later Sahin took their stockade, but at this juncture Ibrahim Khan was appointed governor of Bengal in supersession of Qāsim Khan, who was regarded as responsible for Aba Baqar's disastrous expedition, and Qāsim's partisans in Assam thereupon deserted their posts. Shaikh Ibrahim, the revenue collector of Hājo thinking he saw a chance of making himself independent, sought an alliance with the Ahoms. This was promised on condition that he first drove out the Imperialists from Hājo. Thus encouraged, he stirred up the Koches to a fresh rebellion. Sanātān attacked the Mughal fort at Damdama and Dharma Nārāyan laid siege to Pāndu, but both were driven off. Ibrahim's treachery was discovered; and although he was assisted by the Ahoms, Sahin defeated and killed him. The Ahoms with Dharma Nārāyan occupied Pāndu and advanced towards Hājo, but were defeated with heavy losses, as will be narrated in Chapter VI. The country was still, however, far from settled, and Sahin was constantly fighting with Dharma Nārāyan, Samru and the 18 hill rajas. He was defeated by the Ahoms and Dharma Nārāyan in a surprise attack, and fled with a few survivors to Suālkuchi, after killing his women to prevent them from falling into the hands of the enemy. Having received reinforcements from Bengal, he again took the offensive, captured Samru and forced the hill rajas to submit. On the arrival of further reinforcements (in 1619) he advanced to Pāndu but was overwhelmed by the Ahoms in another surprise attack and fled in great disorder to Hājo.* Fresh quarrels

* In the *Bahāristan-i-Ghaibi* this misfortune is attributed to Sattrajit's treachery.

now broke out between the Muhammadan leaders, and when Shah Jahān rebelled against his father, Sahiṅ left his post to support him. An attempt was made to come to terms with the Ahoms, but the negotiations broke down. The Muhammadans, however, were too disorganized to carry on the war effectively and contented themselves with holding Hājo and a few other strongholds.

Dharma Nārāyan's death and end of Koch rule in Assam.

There were no further hostilities until 1635 when the Muhammadans, after being defeated in several successive engagements, made their last stand at Hājo, which fell after a gallant defence. The whole country west of the Bar Nadi then fell into the hands of the Ahoms. A fresh expedition was sent up from Bengal in 1637, and the Ahoms and their ally Dharma Nārāyan were gradually driven back. A decisive defeat was inflicted on them at Kājali near the mouth of the Kallang. Bali Nārāyan fled and was hotly pursued. He was reduced to great straits, and was eventually killed near Singiri Parbat. In 1638 peace was negotiated. The country west of the Bar Nadi was given up to the Muhammadans, and the Ahoms were left in undisturbed possession of the rest of the kingdom formerly ruled by Parikshit. When Dharma Nārāyan died his son Sundar Nārāyan was installed in his place by the Ahom king, who instructed him to consult the Bar Phukan on all important matters. He made his headquarters at Mangaldai. From this time the eastern Koch kings can no longer be regarded as independent rulers. They still administered a tract, which was more or less coterminous with the Mangaldai subdivision, but they did so as the subordinates of the Ahoms, and their position differed but little from that of the Sāring Raja, the Sadiya Khowa Gohāin and other local governors of the Ahom kings. The western Koch kings continued to rule as vassals of the Muhammadans; and their kingdom still survives, though within narrower limits, in the modern State of Koch Bihār. But their territory lay to the west of the Sankosh and did not include any part of the country which is now comprised within the limits of Assam.

CHAPTER V.

THE RISE OF THE AHOM KINGDOM.

Origin of the Ahoms.

In the last two chapters an account has been given of the fortunes of various Bodo rulers, whose ancestors had been domiciled in Assam from time immemorial, and who had already lost much of their energy and martial qualities by long residence in a fertile and steamy plain. We have now to discuss the doings of a race of alien conquerors. Early in the thirteenth century a band of hardy hill men wandered into the eastern extremity of the Brahmaputra valley, led by chance rather than by any deep-seated design, and quite unconscious of the fact that their descendants were destined to bring the whole valley under their rule and to set a limit to the eastward extension of the empire of the Mughal conquerors of India. These were the progenitors of the Ahoms.* They were an offshoot of the great Tāi or Shān race, which spreads eastwards, from the border of Assam over nearly the whole of Further India, and far into the interior of China. The special section to which they belonged, or the Shāns proper, occupied the northern and eastern hill tracts of Upper Burma and Western Yunnan, where they formed a group of states for which, according to Ney Elias, there is no collective native name. The paramount kingdom, the home of the Mau branch of the tribe, was known to themselves as Mungmau, and as Pong to the Manipuris; and the latter term has been taken by some to denote the entire country or collection of states.

As already stated, the Ahoms had the historic sense very fully developed, and many of the priests and nobles maintained *Buranjis*, or chronicles, which were written up from time to time, and which contain a careful, reliable and continuous narrative of their rule. The following history of the Ahoms has been compiled in the main from the *Buranjis* which still survive.

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* The proper spelling is Āhōm, but the word occurs so frequently that I have refrained from putting accents on the vowels.

The story of the creation as told in Ahom traditions is crude and fantastic, but a brief outline of it may not be altogether devoid of interest.* In the beginning, it is said, there were neither gods nor men, animals nor any living thing. There was no earth, no air, no sun, no moon, no stars, but water only. There was a Supreme Being called Phā, from whom a great light emanated, but he had no corporeal existence and remained suspended in the sky, "like a swarm of bees in a hive." He first assumed shape himself, and then created from his own body a being named Khun-thiw-khām, whose appearance was that of a huge crab, and who lay floating in the waters with his face upwards. A tortoise was next created and a large serpent with eight hoods, also a large white elephant with long tusks. A mountain was made in the north, and a pillar, to which a rope was affixed, was placed on the top of it. Then two large gold-tinted spiders were brought into existence, and from their excrement the earth gradually formed above the waters. They made the heavens with their webs, passing quickly backwards and forwards like a woman working her loom. In due course Phā created a female counterpart of himself, who laid four eggs, from which were hatched after many years four sons. Three of them were appointed to rule the earth, the serpent and the thunder, respectively, while the fourth remained to assist his father in the subsequent acts of creation. The eldest son, the lord of the earth, contravened his father's orders, and although he did so inadvertently, he had to suffer death, and became a spirit. His son, who succeeded him as ruler of the earth, died in his turn, and became a household deity who looks after the welfare of families. Another spirit, whose origin is not explained, took up his abode in a *pipal* tree. Seeing that the world was not going on properly, God created a poet.

The Ahom legend of the creation.

Like many other races the Ahoms have traditions of a flood. It is said that once upon a time there was intense heat from the sun, which dried up all the water on the face

And of the flood.

* A translation of a slightly different version of this legend is given by Dr. Grierson in the Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society for April, 1904. Dr. Grierson points out that the opening portion recalls the cosmogony described in the Babylonian tablets.

of the earth, and many people and animals died of thirst. At length the intense heat caused the earth to crack, and an immense volume of boiling water burst out and killed all remaining living things, save an old man named Thāolipling and a cow, who took refuge in a boat made of stone. As the waters rose, this boat was carried to the summit of a high mountain called Ipā far away to the north-east. The old man and the cow stayed on this mountain. The water gradually subsided, leaving the bodies of the dead men and animals to decay. From them such an evil smell arose that it reached the abode of the Gods, who sent fire down from heaven to burn them. The heat caused by the conflagration was so intense, that the old man, unable to endure it, killed the cow and took refuge inside its body. There he found the seed of a pumpkin. After the fire had passed by, he planted this seed, and a tree grew up, which threw out four branches towards the four points of the compass. The northern branch was killed by the cold, the southern branch fell into the fire and was burnt, the western branch was destroyed by the remains of the flood, and only the eastern branch survived.

This branch grew and flourished exceedingly, and produced a giant gourd, inside of which were men and every kind of animal, bird, and fish, and every kind of plant. The living creatures tried hard to get out, and at length their cries and struggles reached the ears of Lengdon or Indra,* who sent a messenger named Pānthoi to ascertain the cause of the uproar. Pānthoi went and listened, and heard the cries of men, elephants, cattle, and other animals from inside the gourd. He returned and reported this to Indra, who sent his eldest son Āiphālān to break open the gourd by means of a flash of lightning. Āiphālān described to earth to carry out his father's instructions. He at first directed his shaft towards the part of the gourd where the men were, but they

* The Deodhāis or Ahom priests identify all their principal deities with gods of the Hindu pantheon. It is impossible now to say when they first did this, but it may have been long before the Ahom conquest of Assam. Aryan princes, as we have already seen, found their way to Further India at a very early date and took the Hindu mythology with them. The word *Lengdon* means "one-powerful," *i.e.*, The Almighty.

entreated him not to destroy them and implored him to aim elsewhere, saying that, if they were allowed to live and to escape from the gourd, they would settle down and cultivate. Āiphālān then aimed at the place where the cattle were, but they likewise begged him to spare them, saying that they would be required by the men for ploughing.

Lengdon's son again and again changed the direction of his aim, but was always met by entreaties to discharge his fiery missile at some other part of the gourd. At last the old man Thāolipling, who was sitting at the point where the flower had died off from the gourd, offered to sacrifice himself for the men if they would undertake to give him a feast and to worship him ever afterwards. The men promised to do so, and Āiphālān thereupon discharged his lightning at the part of the gourd on which the old man was seated. Thāolipling was killed, but the gourd was split open, and everything inside it escaped. Āiphālān then taught the men different occupations; he also showed the birds how to build their nests, and the other animals how to support themselves. Thāolipling is still worshipped by the Ahom Deodhāis and Bāilongs, the tribal priests and astrologers, who alone of all the Ahoms still retain any recollection of their ancient beliefs. He receives from them periodic offerings of sweets, grain and other edibles. Lengdon is their main and supreme god, but this, they say, does not prevent them from doing homage to the man, but for whose act of self-abnegation the gourd might have remained unbroken until the present day.

The mythical origin of the Ahom kings.

There are two versions of the origin of the Ahom kings, one being the story told by the Deodhais, which tallies very closely with that still preserved amongst the Shāns of Upper Burma, while the other is a modification of it, invented by the Brāhmans with a view to encouraging their conversion to Hinduism. Both agree in attributing to them a divine ancestry.

According to the Deodhāis, Lengdon directed his son Thenkhām to descend to earth and establish a kingdom there. Thenkhām was unwilling to leave heaven, and so it was arranged that his sons Khunlung and Khunlai* should go

* *Khun-lung* means "prince-elder" and *Khun-lai*, "prince-younger."

instead. Lengdon presented them with an idol called Somdeo,* a magic sword, or Hengdān, two drums to be used for invoking divine aid, and four cocks for telling the omens. Khunlung, being the elder, was to be the king, and Khunlai, the younger, his chief councillor.

Khunlung and Khunlai descended from heaven with their following by an iron (or golden) chain in the year 568 A.D., and alighted in the country of Mungrimungrām,† where the Tāis or Shāns dwelt without a king. On arrival it was found that, in the hurry of departure, the cocks and other gifts had been left behind. One Lango went back to fetch them, and was given as his reward the kingdom of

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* A very similar tradition is current in the Shan States (*The Shans at Home* by Milne and Cochrane, pp. 18 *et seq.*), but according to that version there were two idols, a male called Sung, and a female called Sang; Ney Elias says they were the images of Khunlung's ancestors. The Somdeo is said to have been still in the possession of Purandar Singh when he took refuge in Bengal in 1819. In 1912 Colonel P. R. Gurdon, C.S.I., found with his descendant, Kuar Chandra Nārāyan Singh of Jorhat, a metal plaque, oblong in shape, but rounded at the top, measuring about 9½ in. by 3½ in. and half an inch thick, which was said to have been used as a pedestal for the Somdeo. There was a hole at the upper end, by means of which it was said to have been suspended from the neck of the Ahom kings at the time of their coronation ceremony. Colonel Gurdon was informed that the Sōmdeō was a jewel set in a cylinder, and that it was sold in Calcutta by a nephew of Purandar Singh when in financial difficulties. A similar fate, he was told, befell a set of seven gold caskets, one inside the other, in which the Somdeo and plaque were formerly kept. The plaque bears on its back, front and sides Chinese inscriptions, *viz.*, on the front, "Letters patent dated the fifth year of Yung Lo" (1408 A.D.); on the back, "By command of his Imperial Majesty, the President of the Board compares both halves"; on the left side, "Be faithful" and on the right side, "Let the rescript have effect. The Royal Commission for conciliation Timāsā."

The inscriptions on the back and front are complete, but those on the sides, it is said, are only halves, the other halves being on a similar plaque, which it was customary in such cases to retain at the Chinese capital. When tribute was sent in by a dependent ruler, the envoys took the local plaque with them, and the Chinese officials compared it with the complementary plaque in their possession. If the two agreed the tribute was accepted. (J. R. A. S., 1913, p. 253.) Timāsā has been identified with Chingmai, a northern province of Siam which was tributary to China in the fifteenth century. How the plaque came into the possession of the Ahoms, and why it was regarded by them as worthy of association with their tutelary deity, are problems which remain unsolved.

† *Mung-ri-mung-rām* means "country-deserted-country-uninhabited," *i.e.*, an uninhabited and deserted country.

China and also the magic Hengdān. Khunlung and Khunlai built a town in Mungrimungrām. The latter by a stratagem ousted his elder brother, who thereupon, taking the Somdeo with him, went further west, and founded a new kingdom in Mungkhumungjāo.* He ruled for forty years, and then returned to heaven, leaving seven sons. The youngest, Khunchu, succeeded him, the others having been installed during his lifetime as tributary kings of other countries. The eldest son, whose kingdom was called Mungkang, inherited the Somdeo. Another son, it is said, was made king of Ava. In this connection, it is noteworthy that the Burmese rulers always called the Ahom princes their "brother kings." *Mung* means "country" and *Kang* "drum" or "poison," so that Mungkang may be translated either as the "country of the drum" or the "land of poison." Apparently the former is the correct translation, as Ney Elias quotes a tradition that Sāmlungphā found a sapphire drum in the bed of the local river.

The usurper Khunlai ruled in Mungrimungrām for seventy years, and his son Tyāoāijeptyātphā for forty years. The latter is said to have founded the *Aijepi* era, which is still current amongst the Narās and Burmese. He died childless, whereupon Tyāokhunjan, of the line of Khunlung and Khunchu, sent one of his sons to fill the vacant throne. This prince ruled for twenty-five years. On his death his kingdom was divided, one son taking Mungrimungrām and the other Maulung on the Shueli river. The latter and his descendants ruled for three hundred and thirty-three years, when the line became extinct and another of Khunchu's descendants was elected king. One of his grandsons was Sukāphā, the founder of the Ahom kingdom in Assam; he had a dispute with one of his brothers, in consequence of which he left the country and, after stealing the Somdeo from the Raja of Mungkang, fled towards Assam.†

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* *Mung khu-mung-jāo* means "country-great-country-wide," *i.e.*, a land of great extent. Ney Elias gives the name as Maingkaing-maingnyaung.

† I have omitted the long list of kings who are said to have ruled in Mungrimungrām. Their names vary considerably in the different *Buranjis*, and it is impossible to say which, if any, is correct.

The Brahmanical account of the origin of the ruling family is very similar to that invented for other kings of aboriginal stock who, from time to time, were induced to enter the fold of Hinduism. It is said that Vasishta Muni had a hermitage on a hill east of Saumārpith. Indra held high revels there, and was one day seen by the Muni sporting with Sachi in his flower garden. In his wrath, the Muni cursed Indra, and condemned him to have intercourse with a low caste woman. This happened; and the woman, who proved to be an incarnation of Bidyadhāri, begat a son who was highly favoured by Indra. He had many children, of whom Khunlung and Khunlāi were the eldest, and ruled in Mungrimungrām. The subsequent events are as already narrated.

Comparison with traditions of other Shān tribes.

The traditions of the Ahoms regarding the origin of their kings tally very closely in their main features with those preserved by the Shāns of Upper Burma, of which an account has been given by Ney Elias in his *History of the Shans.** There are, as may be well understood, many differences in matters of detail, and especially in the names of the various rulers and of the places where they reigned. A more noteworthy point of divergence is that the Shān chronicles, while they contain no reference to Sukāphā's invasion of Assam, claim that Sāmlungphā, the brother of a king of Mungmau who ascended the throne in 1220 A.D., gained several notable victories in Upper Assam, where he defeated the Chutiyas, as well as in Arakan, Manipur and other countries. The two stories, however, are not necessarily incompatible, and it is quite possible that while Sukāphā was pushing his way across the Pātkāi, with a small body of colonists, rather than of military invaders, and establishing himself in the south-eastern corner of the Brahmaputra valley, the general of another Shān State may have entered the valley by a more easterly route and inflicted a series of defeats on the Chutiyas, whose kingdom was well to the north of the tract where the Ahoms made their first lodgment.

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* A less accurate summary of the same traditions is given by Pemberton in *The Eastern Frontier of India.*

That Sukāphā was the leader of the body of Shāns who laid the foundation of the Ahom kingdom in Assam is a fact established, not only by the unanimous testimony of the *Buranjis*, but also by universal and well-remembered tradition. There is less certainty as to the precise State from which he came, but there seems no reason to discredit the statement of the *Buranjis* to the effect that it was Maulung. In any case, there can be no possible doubt that the original home of the Ahoms was somewhere in the ancient kingdom of Pong. They are genuine Shāns, both in their physical type and in their tribal language and written character. They called themselves Tāi (meaning "celestial origin"), which is the name by which the Shāns still designate themselves, and they maintained a fairly continuous intercourse with the inhabitants of their original home until very recent times. Nor is their movement across the Pātkāi by any means an isolated one. The Khāmtis, Phākiāls, Aitonias, Turungs and Khāmjāngs are all Shān tribes who have, at different times, moved along the same route from the cradle of their race; but the Ahoms were the only ones who did so before the conversion of its inhabitants to Buddhism. The other Shān tribes of Assam are all Buddhists, which shows that they migrated at a later date. The Turungs, in fact, did not reach the plains of Assam until the beginning of the nineteenth century.

Sukāphā is said to have left Maulung in 1215 A.D. with a following of eight nobles, and 9,000 men, women and children. It may be surmised, though this is nowhere stated, that the great majority of his followers were adult males. He had with him two elephants, and 300 horses. For thirteen years he wandered about the hilly country of the Pātkāi, making occasional raids on Nāga villages, and in 1228 A.D. he arrived in Khāmjāng.

Sukāphā. 1228 to 1268 A.D.

He crossed a river called the Khāmnāmjāng in rafts, and came to the Nongnyāng lake. Some Nāgas attempted to resist his advance, but he defeated them and perpetrated frightful atrocities on those whom he captured. He caused many of them to be killed and roasted, and compelled their relatives to eat their flesh. This ghastly barbarity created such widespread terror that the other Nāgas of the

neighbourhood all hastened to make their submission. Leaving one of his nobles to rule the conquered country, Sukāphā proceeded to Dangkāorang, Khāmhāngpung and Nāmrup. He bridged the Sessa river and ascended the Dihing, but, finding the place unsuitable, he retraced his steps and, proceeding downstream, reached Tipām. Thence he went, in 1236 A.D., to Mungklang Chekhru (Abhaypur), where he stayed for several years. In 1240, this tract of country became flooded during the rainy season, so he left it and descended the Brahmaputra to Hābung, where he spent two years. While here, the Ahoms lived by cultivation. But this place also was liable to inundation, and in 1244 a heavy flood necessitated another move. Sukāphā, therefore, continued his journey down the Brahmaputra till he reached the mouth of the Dikhu. Thence he went to Ligirigāon. In 1246 he proceeded to Simaluguri, leaving a detachment at Ligirigāon. He stayed here for some years. It is said that he contemplated an attack on the people inhabiting the valley of the Nāmdāng (a tributary of the Dikhu), but gave up the idea on finding how numerous they were. In 1253 Simaluguri was abandoned in favour of Charāideo, where a city was built amid general rejoicings. To celebrate the occasion two horses were sacrificed to the Gods, and prayers were offered by the Deodhāis under a mulberry tree.

Subjugation of Morāns and Borāhis.

The neighbouring country was at this time in the possession of the Morāns, whose king was named Badanchā, and of the Borāhis, who were then ruled by Thākumthā. The Morāns still survive as a separate tribe. At the end of Ahom rule they occupied the country between the Dāngori and Dibru rivers; they paid no revenue but supplied various products of the jungle, such as elephants, dye, honey and mats. Many now profess to be Ahoms, and they have adopted many Ahom rites and customs; their language, however, is unmistakably Bodo. Sukāphā fought with and defeated these tribes in turn, after which he wisely adopted conciliatory measures, and, by treating them as equals and encouraging intermarriage, he welded them all into one nation. He made friends with his brother rulers in his ancestral home, and sent them presents of gold and silver. He died in 1268 A.D.

Sukāphā was an enterprising and brave prince, and his treatment of the conquered Morāns and Borāhis was most judicious, but his fair fame is sullied by the brutal means he adopted to overawe the hostile Nāgas of the Pātkāi. The memory of his wanderings along the valley of the Dihing river is still preserved in various local names and traditions. Following the practice in his native country, Sukāphā appointed two great officers of State, known as the Bar Gohāin and the Burhā Gohāin, who exercised powers second only to those of the king himself.* It may be mentioned here that the Ahoms called Assam Mungdunsunkhām (country-full-garden-gold) or the country full of golden gardens.

Suteuphā, 1268 to 1281.

Sukāphā was succeeded by his son Suteuphā, who ruled for thirteen years and died in 1281. In his reign the Kachāris abandoned to the Ahoms the country east of the Dikhu river. It is related in one *Buranji* that there was a war between the Narās, or Shāns of Mungkang, and the people of Māntara or Burma. The former were worsted, and appealed for help to Suteuphā, who replied that he would send a force to their assistance if the Narā king would give him a daughter in marriage. The latter declined to do so. A quarrel ensued and Suteuphā sent an expedition against the Narās, but his troops were defeated and the Burhā Gohāin, who commanded them, was slain. The Bar Gohāin was promptly despatched with a second force, but, instead of fighting, he came to terms with the enemy. On his return he was disgraced and imprisoned. He was subsequently forgiven on the intercession of the other nobles.

The Narās.

The Narās are regarded by the Ahoms as their close kinsmen, but Ney Elias inclines to a somewhat different view. In the fabulous or half fabulous account of Khunlung and Khunlai, the former is credited with having occupied the western portion of the country, *i.e.*, the tract around Mungkang in the Hukong valley. From this time, down to its conquest by Sāmlungphā, about 1215 A.D., the Shān

* An account of the Ahom system of government will be found in Chapter IX. That chapter also contains an explanation of the titles of the Ahom kings and nobles.

chronicles contain only a few vague references to this tract as the country of the Narās, and it seems to have formed an entirely independent state. Ney Elias adds that, from the little he was able to glean of the Narās from native sources, they formerly constituted the aboriginal population of the region in question, but afterwards became mixed with the Mau and Khāmti Shāns; their original seat was probably in Khāmti. However that may be, the Narās were a comparatively civilized people, and the few who still remain in Khāmti, Mogaung and Upper Assam are regarded as a learned class. They are Buddhists, and are generally employed as astronomers and writers.

Subinphā, 1281 to 1293.

The next king was Suteuphā's son Subinphā. He reigned from 1281 to 1293. During his reign no addition was made to the territory conquered by Sukāphā. He distributed his Ahom subjects in equal proportions between the Bar Gohāin and the Burhā Gohāin.

Sukhāngphā, 1293 to 1332.

This prince was succeeded by his son Sukhāngphā. During the long period of peace that followed their victory over the earlier inhabitants of the tract in which they had settled, the Ahoms had greatly increased in numbers, not only by natural growth, but also by the admission to their tribe of many local recruits and, probably, by the arrival of fresh emigrants from their old home; and they were now in a position to hold their own against the more powerful Rajas around them. The result was a succession of wars which eventually made them masters of the whole of the Brahmaputra valley. It is said that, they first tried their strength, not against their immediate neighbours, the Chutiyas and Kachāris, but against the Raja of Kāmatā. Hostilities continued for some years with heavy losses on both sides. At last, their adversary grew weary of the war, and, on the advice of his ministers, sent an envoy to sue for peace. A treaty was made, and his daughter Rājani was given to the Ahom king in marriage.

Sukhāngphā died in 1332, after a reign of thirty-nine years. He left four sons Sukhrāngphā, Sutuphā, Tyāokhāmthi and Chāo Pulai. The last-mentioned was by the Kāmatā princess, Rājani. In one *Buranji* it is mentioned that the ruler of Mungkang sent to Sukhāngphā to demand

tribute, on the ground of his being the lineal descendant of the chief of Maulung in whose reign Sukāphā had emigrated. The demand was not complied with, but soon afterwards the Mungkang Raja died and the matter was dropped.*

Sukhrāngphā, the eldest of the late king's four sons, ascended the vacant throne. He soon became unpopular, and his half-brother Chāo Pulāi, whom he had appointed to be Sāring Raja, hatched a conspiracy against him. The plot being detected, Chāo Pulai fled to his kinsman, the Raja of Kāmatā, who agreed to help him and marched to Athgāon and thence to Sāring. Sukhrāngphā became alarmed and, not feeling sufficiently certain of the loyalty of his troops, opened negotiations and became reconciled with Chāo Pulāi. **Sukhrāng-phā, 1332 to 1364.**

According to some accounts, Chāo Pulāi's conspiracy was instigated by the Bar Gohāin, while others say that it was that officer who had poisoned the king's mind against him. But all agree that the Bar Gohāin was the one to suffer, and he only escaped being put to death under the king's orders by concealing himself until the affair had blown over. He was subsequently forgiven and taken back into favour. Sukhrāngphā died in 1364 after a reign of thirty-two years.

He was succeeded by his brother Sutuphā. There were frequent disputes with the Chutiyās during this reign. At last, in 1376, the Chutiyā king visited Sutuphā at Chāpāguri, and, pretending to be reconciled, invited him to a regatta on the Sāfrāi river. He enticed him on to his own barge without attendants, and there treacherously murdered him. **Sutuphā, 1364 to 1376.**

After Sutuphā's death, there was no prince whom the great nobles thought worthy of the throne, and so, for four years, the Bar Gohāin and Burhā Gohāin carried on the administration themselves. **Interregnum, 1376 to 1380.**

At last, in 1380, finding it difficult to govern the country without a king, they raised Tyāokhāmti, the third son of **Tyāo-khāmti, 1380 to 1389.**

* This affair is not mentioned by Ney Elias. In his table of the Mogaung Tsaubwas, Chā-kun-lāo is shown as reigning there from 1248 to 1308 and his son Chāu-pureing from 1308 to 1344. The alleged length of the former's reign leads one to suspect that the record is incomplete.

Sukhāngphā, to the throne. One of his first acts was to lead an army against the Chutiyās to punish them for the treacherous murder of Sutuphā. The elder of his two wives was left in charge during his absence. She was on bad terms with the younger queen, who was the king's favourite, and took advantage of her position as regent to cause a false accusation to be preferred against her. The charge was investigated and declared true, whereupon the elder queen ordered her to be beheaded. The ministers, however, seeing that she was pregnant, instead of killing her, set her adrift on the Brahmaputra on a raft. The king was victorious in his campaign against the Chutiyās, but was horrified, on his return, to hear of the execution of his favourite wife, especially when a new and impartial enquiry showed that the allegations against her were false. He was, however, too much under the influence of the elder queen to venture to take action against her. This, and his failure to prevent her from committing numerous acts of oppression, irritated the nobles so much that in 1389 they caused him to be assassinated.

Interregnum, 1389 to 1397.

There was again no suitable successor to the throne, and the great nobles ruled once more without a king. Some years later, a man named Thāo Cheoken went across the Brahmaputra to trade in cattle, and there, in a Hābung village, he saw a youth, named Sudāng, of such noble aspect that he made enquiries about him, and learnt that he was the son of Tyāokhāmthi's younger queen. The raft on which she was set adrift had floated to this Hābung village, where a Brāhman gave the unfortunate woman shelter. She died, after giving birth to this boy, who was brought up by the Brāhman along with his own children. The Burhā Gohāin was informed of these facts and, after verifying the story and consulting the other ministers, he brought the youth to the capital and placed him on the throne.

Sudāngphā, 1397 to 1407.

Sudāngphā became king in 1397. He was then fifteen years of age. From having been brought up in a Brāhman's house, he is often known as the "Brāhman Prince." He built a town at Dholā, but afterwards made his capital at Charguya near the Dihing river. His accession marks the first stage in the growth of Brahmanical influence amongst

the Ahoms. He brought with him from the Hābung country the Brāhman who had sheltered him and his sons. The latter were given posts of importance on the frontier, while the old Brāhman himself was installed as his confidential adviser, and, under his influence, many Hindu rites and ceremonies began to be observed.

The Tipām chiefs, who were dissatisfied with the new régime, hatched a plot against the young king. This came to his ears, but instead of at once taking open steps against the conspirators, he caused a stockade for catching elephants to be constructed, and having caught some elephants, invited them to join him in celebrating the occasion by a feast. Cows and buffaloes were slain and, when the festivities were in full swing and all suspicion had been allayed, the conspirators were suddenly overpowered and put to death. According to a practice which was common amongst the Ahoms and many other Asiatic tribes, their heads were piled up in a heap as a trophy.

Having thus disposed of his more active enemies, Sudāngphā endeavoured to conciliate the rest of the Tipāmias by marrying the daughter of one of their chiefs named Khuntai. The girl, however, had already become enamoured of a Tipāmia named Tāi Sulāi, and the latter, after dining one night with the king, sent a ring to the queen by one of his servants. The king was informed of this, and called for an explanation from Tāi Sulāi, who fled forthwith to Surumphā, king of Mungkang, and begged for help. The latter sent his Bar Gohāin with an army against Sudāngphā, who met the invaders in person and defeated them, near Kuhiārbāri in the Tipām country, but sustained a slight wound from a spear-thrust while riding on an elephant at the head of his troops. The enemy were pursued by the Ahom Bar Gohāin as far as the Pātkāi. There were no further hostilities, and a formal treaty was concluded in 1401 by which the Pātkāi was fixed as the boundary between the two countries. The meeting of the two Bar Gohāins, who conducted the negotiations for peace, took place on the side of the Nongnyāng lake, twenty-eight miles south-west of Margherita, and statues of them are said to have been carved in the rock there. A solemn oath of amity was sworn, and

consecrated by the cutting up of a fowl. The word Pātkāi is said to be derived from this incident. The full name was Pāt-kāi-seng-kau, which means "cut-fowl-oath-sworn." The former name of the pass was Dāi-kau-rang or "the junction of nine peaks." Nong-nyāng means "lake-shaking."

Tāi Sulāi, being thus deprived of his asylum, took refuge with the Raja of Kāmatā, who refused to give him up. An expedition was despatched under the Bar Gohāin to invade Kāmatā, but the Raja averted war by giving his daughter Bhājani to Sudāngphā, with a dowry of two elephants and a number of horses and of male and female servants, as well as a quantity of gold and silver.*

Sudāngphā devoted the remaining years of his reign to completing the subjugation of the Tipām, Khāmjāng and Aiton tribes, whose chiefs had again refused to pay tribute. It was found that they had received encouragement from the Narā Raja. Messengers were sent to remonstrate with him; he warned the recusant chiefs not to expect any further aid from him and they then submitted. Sudāngphā died in 1407 after a reign of ten years. Gunābhirām says that this king gave himself up to a life of self-indulgence, but none of the *Buranjis* in any way confirm this statement, and its accuracy is doubtful. His reign was a very eventful one, and in one battle at least he fought at the head of his troops.

Sujāngphā, 1407 to 1422.

The late king's son Sujāngphā ascended the throne. Nothing of any importance is recorded during his reign. He died in 1422.

Suphākphā, 1422 to 1439.

One of his sons, Suphākphā, was the next king. He reigned seventeen years, and died in 1439. His reign also was uneventful.

Susenphā, 1439 to 1488.

Susenphā, a son of Suphākphā by a Tipām princess, now ascended the throne. The chief occurrence of his reign was an expedition against the Tangsu Nāgas in retaliation for raids committed by them. The king, who led his troops in person, attacked and routed the Nāgas, but the Ahoms lost

* Blochmann, relying on Prinsep, says that during this reign the Ahoms conquered North-East Bengal as far as the Karatōyā (J. A. S. B., 1873, p. 235). The source of Prinsep's information is not known, but the statement probably refers to this dispute with the Raja of Kāmatā.

one hundred and forty men in the battle.* A ruler of some country to the east of Assam is said to have sent presents to Susenphā in order to make friends with him, and the Ākhāmpā Nāgas came in with a present of swords as a token of their submission.

Susenphā died in 1488 after a reign of forty-nine years. The scanty references to his long reign in the *Buranjis* may perhaps be taken as proof that he was a good king and that under his rule the people were contented and prosperous.

Susenphā was followed by his son Suhenphā. War was renewed with the Tangsu Nāgas, who were ultimately defeated, though, at the commencement of hostilities, they routed a detachment of Ahoms, and cut off the head of the Bar Gohāin who was in command. In 1490 war broke out with the Kachāris. The Ahom army was defeated at Dampuk, on the bank of the Dikhu, with the loss of a commander and one hundred and twenty men killed and many more wounded. The Ahoms sued for peace, and a princess was sent to the Kachāri king with two elephants and twelve female slaves as her dowry.† **Suhenphā, 1488 to 1493.**

Suhenphā was assassinated in 1493 by some men of the Tāirungbān clan. They had been punished for stealing some paddy from the royal granary and, in revenge, stabbed the king to death with a pointed bamboo, while engaged on some repairs in the palace. According to some accounts the murder was instigated by the Burhā Gohāin.

Suhenphā was succeeded by his son Supimphā, who at once set himself to trace out and punish his father's murderers. This led to the revolt of the Burhā Gohāin, who appears to have been suspected of complicity. There is a story that one of Supimphā's wives happened to see a **Supimphā, 1493 to 1497.**

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* This is the general version. According to one account the Ahoms were defeated, while another writer says that Susenphā himself fled from the field in a litter, being so overcome with panic that he was purged as he sat there, and that the Bānrukia Gohāin then took command and defeated the Nāgas with heavy loss. The word Tangsu is said to be derived from the Ahom *tang* "chase" and *su* "tiger."

† This is the version given in the *Buranjis*. Gunābhirām says that the battle was indecisive and that, when peace was made, the Kachāris ceded some territory.

Nāga chief, who had come to pay tribute, and praised his beauty in the king's hearing. The latter was so incensed at this that he sent her to the Nāga's village. She was pregnant at the time and subsequently gave birth to a son of whom more will be heard later on. Supimphā died, or, as some say, was assassinated, in 1497.

Suhungmung (the Dihingia Raja), 1497 to 1539.

His son Suhungmung ascended the throne at Charguya with great ceremony. The increasing influence of the Brāhmans is shown by the fact that he assumed the Hindu title Svarga Nārāyan.* He was better known as the Dihingia Raja, because he made his capital at Bakatā on the Dihing and settled a number of Ahoms in the neighbourhood, after erecting an embankment along the river to prevent inundation when it was in flood. In 1504, the Aitonia Nāgas revolted, and the Bar Gohāin and the Burhā Gohāin were placed in charge of an expedition against them. The Nāgas were defeated, and acknowledged the supremacy of the Ahom king, to whom they sent a daughter of their chief and a present of four elephants as a peace offering. They also agreed to pay a yearly tribute of axes, gongs and amber.

In 1510 an enquiry was made into the number, condition and distribution of the people, and they were divided into clans. In 1512 the Hābung country was annexed.

Subjugation of the Chutiyas.

In 1513 the Chutiya Raja, Dhir Nārāyan, invaded the country with an army and a flotilla of boats.† His land forces were defeated at Dikhu Mukh by the Ahoms, who were also victorious in a naval encounter at Siraāti. The Chutiyas lost heavily in both engagements and were compelled to retreat, whereupon Suhungmung took possession of Mungkhrāng, and of the country round Nāmdāng, where he built a town. Dhir Nārāyan now invoked the aid of the Raja of Mungkang, who was at first disposed to help him. He was, however, dissuaded by a Bānpara chief, and

* This title, or its variant Svarga Deb became henceforth the designation by which the Ahom kings described themselves in their official documents.

† According to some accounts, the invasion occurred in 1516, and the name of the Chutiya king was Chandra Nārāyan, not Dhir Nārāyan as stated in the text.

eventually sent presents to Suhungmung and made an alliance with him.*

Failing to obtain help from outside, the Chutiyas made no effort to recover their lost territory until 1520, when they attacked the Ahom fort at Mungkhrāng. The Ahom commander was killed in a sortie and the garrison fled; and for a time the Chutiyas once more ruled this tract of country. For some reason, not disclosed in the *Buranjis*, two years elapsed before Suhungmung equipped a fresh expedition. The Chutiyas were then engaged and defeated near the mouth of the Sessa river; and not only was the lost territory recovered, but a further advance was made to the mouth of the Tiphāo river, where a fort was erected.

In 1523 the Chutiyas laid siege to this fort, but met with a stubborn resistance. Suhungmung hurried to the place with strong reinforcements, and arrived on the very day on which the Chutiyas were delivering their assault. He at once made a counter-attack, and the Chutiyas were utterly routed. They sued for peace and sent valuable presents, but Suhungmung would accept nothing less than the heirlooms of the Chutiya king, his gold cat, gold elephant, and gold umbrella. These being refused, the war was continued. The Chutiyas fortified a position at the mouth of one of the rivers near Sadiya, but were easily dislodged by the Ahoms, who crossed the river on a bridge of boats and pursued the retreating Chutiyas as far as the Kāitara hill. The latter then occupied the hill Chautan (Chaudangiri), and for some time kept the Ahoms in check by rolling down heavy stones. As it was found impossible to win the position by a frontal attack, a force was detailed to take the enemy in the rear. The back of the mountain was precipitous, and, at first, the ascent seemed impracticable; but the Ahom soldiers were

* According to Ney Elias, it is stated in the Shān chronicles that Chaukaaphā, who ascended the throne of Mungkang or Mogaung in 1493 and might, therefore, well have been still alive at the time of the projected invasion mentioned in the text, set out to undertake the conquest of Assam, but that, on reaching the boundary, the Ahom king sent him large presents of cattle and horses and he retreated peacefully. This apparently refers to the same incident.

not to be denied, and, by holding on to creepers, they at last gained the summit. The Chutiyas, taken by surprise, fled hastily to Jāngmungkhām (Māthādāng), when another engagement was forced on them. Their king was killed by an arrow, and his eldest son, who rushed forward to avenge his death, was also slain. The Chutiyas then gave way, and fled, hotly pursued by the Ahoms, who took a great number of prisoners, including the whole of the royal family except the principal queen who, preferring death to captivity, killed herself with a spear. The captives and loot (including the royal heirlooms) were presented to Suhungmung, together with the heads of the Chutiya king and his son. These were buried under the steps of the temple at Charāideo, so that the Ahom king might walk over them whenever he entered the temple.

The whole Chutiya country was now annexed, and a new officer of State, known as the Sadiyā Khowa Gohāin, was appointed to administer it. In order to strengthen his position, three hundred Ahoms of the Gharphaliya clan, with their families and twelve chiefs, were removed from Garhgāon to Sadiya, and another contingent of the same clan were settled on the banks of the Dihing river. The royal family, with the leading men amongst the Chutiyas, were deported to Pākariguri, while a number of Brāhmans and of blacksmiths and other artisans were taken from Sadiya to the Ahom capital. Having settled all these matters, Suhungmung returned to Charāideo where he performed the *Rikkhvān* ceremony.

Description of Rikkhvān ceremony.

This is an Ahom ceremony for obtaining long life (from *rik*, "revive," and *khvān*, "life"). It was generally performed at the installation of a new king, or in time of danger, or after a victory. The procedure was as follows. The king sat in full dress on a platform, and the Deodhāi, Mohan and Bāilong pandits, *i.e.*, the tribal priests and astrologers, poured holy water, purified by the recitation of sacred texts, over his head, whence it ran down his body through a hole in the platform on to the chief Bāilong, or astrologer, who was standing below. The king then changed his clothes, giving those which he had been wearing and all his ornaments to the chief Bāilong. The same ceremony, on

a smaller scale, was also frequently performed by the common people, and still is, on certain occasions, *e.g.*, when a child is drowned.

Disturbances in Sadiya.

The Sadiyā Khowā Gohāin was shortly afterwards attacked by Phukāngmung, a chief of one of the neighbouring hill tribes. The latter was defeated and slain, but not before he had himself killed one of the Ahom commanders with his spear. Another local chief, who had been inclined to give trouble, thereupon made his submission and sent a daughter to the royal seraglio. In 1525 Suhungmung proceeded in person to the Dihing country and appointed officers to administer the frontier provinces of Hābung, Dihing and Banlung.

Creation of appointment of Barpātra Gohāin.

It is narrated that the wife of the late king Supimphā who had been sent by him to a Nāga chief, subsequently gave birth to a son named Senglung. Suhungmung, on seeing this youth, was struck by his high-bred appearance, and learning that his mother was already pregnant before Supimphā sent her away, he took him into favour, and created for him the new appointment of Barpātra Gohāin, which he made equal to those of the Bar Gohāin and the Burhā Gohāin. These two functionaries objected to the new appointment and refused to give up for it any of the men under their control. The king, however, overcame this difficulty by allotting to the Barpātra Gohāin, the Barāhis, Chutiyas and Morāns, who had not been placed under either of the other Gohāins. He then called a council of all the leading nobles, and, giving Senglung a seat between the Bar Gohāin and the Burhā Gohāin, publicly invested him with his new appointment and declared his rank to be equal to theirs.

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* A stone pillar has recently been found by Mr. O'Callaghan amongst the remains of what must once have been a town of some importance, on the bank of the Deopāni river, about seven miles north of Sadiya. This pillar (like the coins of the Ahom kings) is octagonal in shape, and bears an inscription in Ahom by the "Dihingia Bar Gohāin," confirming the Mishmis in the possession of the hills near the Dibong river on the payment by them of tribute, including four baskets of poison.

The official in question was perhaps the Bar Gohāin of the Dihingia Raja; and if so, the inscription refers to the settlement made with the Mishmis when the country round Sadiya was first brought under Ahom rule. It may, however, refer to the later settlement effected with the Mishmis in the reign of Suklāmphā.

Kachāri war.

In November 1526 Suhungmung marched against the Kachāris, and ascended the Dhansiri to Barduār, where a bathing ghāt was constructed under his orders. He caused a fort with brick walls to be built at Marangi, and spent several nights there. He then advanced with his army, the leaders of which were mounted on elephants, to Maihām or Kāthkatia. The vanguard was here surprised and put to flight with the loss of 40 men killed, and Maihām was reoccupied by the Kachāris. The Ahoms were rallied and advanced again to the attack; and this time, although the Kachāris defended themselves valiantly with bows and arrows, they were at last overpowered and forced to retreat with heavy loss. They were closely followed by the Ahoms, and a fresh engagement was forced on them, in which they sustained a decisive defeat, leaving, according to one account, 1,700 dead upon the field.

Chutiya revolt.

Early in 1527 the Chutiyas revolted. They were soon reduced to submission, but the Dihingia Gohāin lost his life during the disturbances.

Muhammadan invasion.

In the same year occurred the first Muhammadan invasion recorded in Ahom history. The name of the Mussalman commander is not given, but he is called the great Vazir.* The Ahoms attacked his army in front and on

* This is apparently the invasion referred to by the author of the *Riyāzussalātin* in the following passage:--

"After having reduced the Rajas of the districts as far as Orissa, Husain took tribute from them. After this he resolved to invade the kingdom of Āsām, in the north-east of Bengal, and he set out with a large army of foot and a numerous fleet, and entered the kingdom and subdued it as far as Kāmrup and Kāmatā and other districts. The Raja of the country, unable to withstand, withdrew to the mountains. Sultan Husain left his son with a strong army in Āsām to complete the settlement of the country, and returned victoriously to Bengal. After the return of the Sultan the Prince pacified and guarded the conquered country; but when the rains set in, and the roads were closed, the Raja issued with his men from the hills, surrounded the Prince, and cut off his supplies. In a short time they were all killed."

The expeditions against Kāmatā and against the Ahoms are here spoken of as forming part of the same operations. If this were so, there would be an error of more than twenty years in the date given in the Ahom *Buranjis*, as the fall of Kāmatāpur took place 1498 A.D. The author of the *Riyāz* does not, however, give his authority for his version, and it does not tell very strongly against the theory that there were in reality two separate expeditions, the one against

both flanks and defeated it. They carried the pursuit as far as the Burai river and captured forty horses and from twenty to forty cannon. On hearing of the victory, Suhungmung proceeded to Salā and sent a force to take possession of Duimunisila. A fort was constructed at the mouth of the Burai river and a detachment was posted at Phulbāri. After making these dispositions the king returned to his capital. In 1529 he again went to Salā, whence he despatched filibustering expeditions down the Kallang and up the Bharali. The slaves and booty taken in these forays were made over to the king who, after leaving a guard at Nārāyanpur, returned to Dihing. At the close of the year, the Chutiyas again revolted, but they were defeated in various engagements on the Chandangiri and Dangthang hills, and on the banks of the Brahmaputra, Dibong and Kundil rivers.

Fresh war with Kachāris.

In 1531, the Ahoms again erected a fort at Marangi. This gave offence to Khunkhara, the Kachāri king, and he sent his brother Detchā to drive them out. A battle was fought, in which the Kachāris were routed and their commander was killed. In order to punish Khunkhara for this attack, and for his encroachments elsewhere, Suhungmung proceeded up the Dhansiri with a large army, and halted at the junction of the Doyang and Dhansiri rivers. A night attack was made on a place called Nika, which was taken and burnt. The Ahoms then advanced to Dengnut, where the army was divided into two divisions, one ascending the left, and the other the right, bank of the Dhansiri. Another battle was fought, and the Kachāris were again defeated and

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Kāmatā in 1498, and the other against the Ahoms some twenty years later. The *Riyāz* was not compiled until 1787, and two expeditions in the same direction might easily be confused, and treated as one and the same, in the lapse of years and the uncertain record of oral tradition or loose writing. It is known that the invasion of Kāmatāpur ended with the death of the Raja Nilāmbar. In Husain Shāh's inscription of A.H. 907 (1501 A.D.) at Gaur the conquest of Kāmrup and Kāmata only is referred to, and there is no mention of any expedition against the Ahoms, so that it had probably then not taken place. In these circumstances there seems no reason to doubt the accuracy of the Ahom chronology. In the *Fathiyah i'Ibriyah* it is said that Husain Shāh's army consisted of 24,000 foot and horse and numerous ships. (J. A. S. B., 1872, pp. 78 and 335, and 1873, p. 209).

pursued as far as their capital at Dimāpur,* on the left bank of that river. The Kachāri king fled with his son, and a prince named Detsung was set up in his place, after he had given his sister to Suhungmung, and made numerous presents to him, and his chief nobles.

Further Muhammadan invasions.

Hostilities were now renewed with the Muhammadans who had advanced up the Brahmaputra with fifty vessels. A battle was fought at Temāni in which the Ahoms were victorious, and the Muhammadan commander, leaving his ships, fled on horse-back. Garrisons were placed by the Ahoms at Salā, on the bank of the Bharali, and at Singiri. The last-mentioned place, which was in charge of the Barpātra Gohāin, was soon afterwards attacked by a large force of Muhammadans, but they were defeated and pursued as far as Khāgarijān (Nowgong) and their commander, Bit Mālik, was slain. Fifty horses and many cannons, guns, etc., were taken and presented to Suhungmung, who was so delighted with the Barpātra Gohāin's conduct of the operations that he presented him with a beautiful girl and ordered the *Rikkhvān* ceremony to be performed for him with great pomp.

In April 1532, a Muhammadan commander named Turbak† with thirty elephants, 1,000 horses and a large park of artillery, as well as a great number of foot soldiers, invaded the country, and encamped opposite the Ahom fort at Singiri. On hearing of this, Suhungmung sent his son

* Dimā means "big river," *di* or *dui* being the Kachāri word for "water" or "river," and *mā* their word for "great." This word was always used with special reference to the Dhansiri, on whose bank Dimāpur was situated. The southern Kachāris call themselves Dimāsā, a corruption of Dimā-fisā, or "sons of the great river." The Ahoms called the Dhansiri Nām-timā, *nām* being their own word for "river." Similarly until recently the Jaldhaka river in North Bengal was known as the Di-chhu, *di* being, as we have seen, the Kachāri, and *chhu* the Tibetan word for water. Dimāpur was called by the Ahoms Che-din-chi-pen (town-earth-burn-make) or the "brick town." They also sometimes called it Che-dima or the "town on the Dima." We have no record of the name which the Kachāris themselves gave it.

† This commander's name cannot be traced in any Muhammadan history. Nasrat Shāh ruled till 1532 when he was murdered by his eunuchs. Alā'uddin Firuz Shāh, who succeeded him, reigned only a few months, and was followed by Mahmud Shāh, the last of the dynasty of Husain Shāh. He was defeated by Sher Shāh in 1538.

Suklen with strong reinforcements to Singiri, and himself proceeded to Salā. After a long time spent in skirmishing, Suklen became impatient and, contrary to the advice of his astrologers, crossed the Brahmaputra and attacked the Muhammadan encampment. He met with a vigorous resistance, and, in the end, suffered a crushing defeat, eight of his commanders being killed and he himself severely wounded. The Ahoms retreated to Salā, where reinforcements were collected, and the Barpātra Gohāin was made the Commander-in-Chief.

The Musalman army halted at Koliābar for the rainy season, and during the next few months the only event recorded is the capture by them of seven boats on the Brahmaputra. In October they took up a position at Ghiladhāri, and in November, Suklen, who had recovered from his wound, came down to take command of the Ahom forces at Salā, where he was shortly afterwards surrounded by the Muhammadans. They burnt down the houses outside the fort, but, in an attempt to storm the place, were repulsed by the Ahoms, who poured boiling water on them. A sortie was made, and the Muhammadan cavalry was being driven back, when their artillery came to the rescue and threw into confusion the elephants attached to the Ahom army, which was then repulsed with heavy loss. In one or two subsequent encounters also, success rested with the Musalmans. At last the fortune of war changed. In March 1533 a naval engagement near Duimunisila resulted in a great victory for the Ahoms. Two Muhammadan commanders, Bangāl and Tāju (*sic*), were slain, together with a large number of common soldiers. According to the *Buranjis* the total losses on the side of the invaders were between 1,500 and 2,500 men. They also lost twenty-two ships and a number of big guns.

Next day, Turbak was reinforced by Husain Khān with six elephants, 100 horses and 500 foot soldiers. He now took up a position at the mouth of the Dikrai, while the Ahoms pitched their camp on the opposite bank. The two armies lay facing each other for several months, each waiting for the other to leave its entrenchments. The initiative was eventually taken by the Ahoms, who attacked and defeated

the Muhammadans in a series of engagements. The final battle was fought near the Bharali. A number of elephants and horses on the Musalman side got bogged in a morass, and their line of battle was thus thrown into confusion. Turbak tried to save the day by leading a cavalry charge in person, but in vain. He was transfixed by a spear,* and, when he fell, the defeat became a rout. The Ahoms followed hard on the fugitives as far as the Karatoya river, where their commander is said to have erected a temple and excavated a tank in commemoration of the victory. Before returning, an envoy is said to have been sent by him to the king of Gaur with presents, and to have brought back a princess for the Ahom king. It would thus appear that this invasion was the work, not of the nominal king of Bengal, but of some local Muhammadan chief or free-lance, of whom, at this period, there were many in the outlying parts of that province.

During the pursuit, Husain Khān was caught and put to death. Twenty-eight elephants and 850 horses were taken, together with a great number of cannon and matchlocks, and a quantity of gold and silver and other booty. This was made over to the king, who divided the elephants and horses among his nobles. He then returned to his capital at Dihing and performed the *Rikkhvān* ceremony, after which he proceeded to Charāideo, where he offered oblations to the dead and sacrifices to the Gods. The head of Turbak was buried on the top of the Charāideo hill.

The use of firearms by the Ahoms dates from the close of this war. Up to this time their weapons had consisted of

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* This seems the most reliable story, but according to one *Buranji*, he was treacherously stabbed before the engagement, by an assassin sent by Suhungmung, who saw that it was hopeless to expect victory so long as Turbak lived. In one of the *Buranjis* in Wade's collection of translations, the original of which is no longer available, even grosser treachery is alleged. It is said that the Barpātra Gohāin made his submission to Turbak and then went with a party of his officers as guests of the corresponding officers of the Muhammadan army. They took with them spears hidden in bamboos and swords concealed in their bedding. At midnight each guest murdered his host, Turbak being assassinated by the Barpātra Gohāin himself.

swords, spears, and bows and arrows.* The Muhammadans who were taken prisoners in this war were settled in different parts of the country. Tradition says that they were at first ordered to cut grass for the king's elephants, but were found quite unfit for this work. They were next employed as cultivators, but their ignorance of agriculture was so great that they carried mud to the paddy seedlings instead of ploughing land and planting the seedlings in it. They were then left to their own devices, and took to working in brass, an occupation which their descendants, who are known as Morias, carry on to this day.†

Cattle disease.

In 1534 there was a very severe outbreak of cattle disease, a scourge which was formerly supposed not to have been known in Assam till comparatively modern times, and a great number of cattle died.

Expeditions against Nāgas.

The years 1535 and 1536 were taken up with hostilities against the Khāmjāng, Tāblung and Nāmsāng Nāgas. The operations were entrusted to the king's son Suklen, who had already distinguished himself in the struggle with the Muhammadans. The Khāmjāng Nāgas soon yielded and paid a fine of one hundred *mithun* (bison), which were presented to the king, but the two other tribes inflicted a reverse on the Ahom troops, who retreated with the loss of four guns. Shortly afterwards, however, they made their submission and returned the guns.

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* This is the statement of the Ahom historians, and is probably correct. The previous use of fire-arms is nowhere mentioned in any history or tradition. Tavernier, however, in narrating the result of Mir Jumlah's expedition to Assam in 1663, says:—

"'Tis thought that these (the Ahoms) were the people that formerly invented gunpowder; which spread itself from Asām to Pegu and from Pegu to China, from when the invention has been attributed to the Chinese. However, certain it is that Mirgimola brought from thence several pieces of cannon, which were all iron guns, and store of excellent powder, both made in the country. The powder is round and small like ours, and of excellent quality." (Tavernier, London, 1678, Pt. II, Bk. III, p. 187).

† The ordinary Muhammadans of Assam call themselves *Gariā*, an indication of their claim to have come originally from Gaur, the ancient Muhammadan capital of Bengal. *Moria* may be a corruption of this word (the Morias frequently pronounce *g* as *m*), or the term may have reference to the way in which they fashion their wares by beating; *māriba* means "to beat" in Assamese.

Final defeat of Kachāris in Dhansiri valley.

In the meantime the Kachāri Raja, Detsung, had again shown signs of hostility. An army was sent against him, and the king himself accompanied it as far as Marangi, or the lower part of the Dhansiri valley. The force advanced *viâ* Hāmdai to Bānphu, from which place troops were sent up both banks of the Doyang. The force which marched along the right bank drove back the Kachāris, but that on the left bank was held in check until reinforcements were pushed forward, whereupon the Kachāris fled, and suffered heavy loss in the pursuit which followed. Detsung at first took refuge in a fort on the Daimāri hill, but on the approach of the Ahoms, who advanced up the Dhansiri, he fled, first to Lengur and then to his capital at Dimāpur.

The Ahoms continued to press forward, but, by the time they reached Dimāpur, Detsung had again fled. His mother and three princesses were found in the city; the former was put to death, but the princesses were sent to the king's harem. Detsung was pursued to Jangmārāng, where he was at last taken and put to death. His head was brought to the Ahom king, under whose orders it was buried on the Charāideo hill. There was no further attempt at resistance; and the Ahoms thus became masters, not only of the Dhansiri valley, which they never attempted to occupy and which soon relapsed into jungle, but also of the whole of the Kachāri possessions north of the Kallang river in Nowgong. The king returned to his capital and, as usual after a successful campaign, offered oblations to the dead and sacrifices to the Gods. In this war the Kachāris as well as the Ahoms are reported to have used cannon.

Relations with Koch and Manipuri kings.

In 1537, the Koch king Bisva Singh and his brother are said to have visited the Ahom Raja and offered him presents. They were given presents in return, and were escorted back by a guard of honour. In the same year envoys were sent to the Raja of Manipur, and presents were exchanged.

Suhungmung is assassinated.

The relations of the king with his son Suklen gradually became very strained. Suklen had been very anxious to take for himself the three Kachāri princesses captured at Dimāpur and was mortally offended when his father asserted his right to them. The latter, on his side, was exasperated by his son

coming on one occasion into his presence without making the customary obeisance. They quarrelled again over a cock fight, and, at last, Suklen, who had already been suspected of treachery during the war with the Muhammadans, became openly hostile. The king was afraid of treachery, and made Suklen's mother swear fealty by dipping her hand in water, but, this notwithstanding, in January 1539, Suklen suborned a Kachāri servant of the king, named Rātiman who crept stealthily into his bedroom and stabbed him while he slept. The assassin was caught and killed by the palace guard before he could make good his escape.

His character and achievements.

Thus died Suhungmung after an eventful reign of forty-two years. He was a bold, enterprising, and resourceful ruler, and the Ahom dominions were extended by him in all directions. The Chutiyas were subjugated, and their country was brought under control by the appointment of Ahom officials at Sadiya and on the Dihing, and by the settlement at those places of a number of Ahom families. Vigorous measures were taken to put down Nāga raids, which, up to that time, had been of frequent occurrence. The power of the Kachāris was broken, and their capital at Dimāpur was twice occupied. A permanent official known as the Marangi Khowā Gohāin was appointed to hold the lower valley of the Dhansiri,* and the greater part of Nowgong was also annexed. Three Muhammadan invasions were successfully repulsed.

The social condition of the people was attended to. They were divided into clans, and artisans were imported from the Chutiya country and elsewhere. The use of firearms was introduced; and the *Sak* era of the Hindus was adopted in place of the old system of calculating dates by the Jovian cycle of sixty years, which is described in Appendix B.

The reign was not less important from a religious point of view. Apart from the growing influence of the Brāhmans, it witnessed the spread of the Vaishnava reformation promulgated by Sankar Deb, which has already been dealt with in the Chapter on Koch rule.

* A garrison of 3,000 men was still maintained in Marangi at the end of the 18th century. (Wade's "Geographical Sketch of Assam" in *Annual Asiatic Register*, 1805.)

Suklenmung, 1539 to 1552.

The patricide Suklenmung succeeded to the throne. He made his capital at Garhgāon, whence he is also known as the Garhgāya Rajā. His first act was to endeavour to remove suspicion as to his complicity in his father's murder by ordering the assassin's brothers to be put to death. During the earlier years of his reign, he paid repeated visits to the country recently taken from the Kachāris, for the purpose of bringing it under proper control and introducing a settled form of government. Finding that his efforts were being hampered by the turbulence of some of the petty chiefs, or Bhuiyās, who occupied the valley of the Kopili, he caused them to be transported to a place nearer head-quarters, where they would be under supervision.

Hostilities with the Koches.

In 1542 a Chutiya raid is recorded, but the great event of the reign was the commencement of a series of conflicts with the Koch king Nar Nārāyan, who was rapidly becoming the most powerful ruler in this part of India. The *Buranjis* are, for the most part, silent as to the cause of the war, but it commenced in 1546 with the advance of a Koch force under the redoubtable Sukladhvaj *alias* Chilarai, the king's brother and generalissimo, along the north bank of the Brahmaputra as far as the Dikrai river, where it was met by the Ahoms. A battle ensued in which the Koches, whose chief weapons were bows and arrows, succeeded in killing several of the Ahom leaders, whereupon the common soldiers fled and were pursued with great slaughter. The remnants of the Ahom army assembled at Kharanga, whence they marched to Kaliābar, at which place a second, but less decisive, action was fought. The Ahoms then took up a new position at Salā, where they were again attacked by the Koches and put to flight, with the loss of twenty of their chief officers. No further attempt was made to dislodge the invaders, who were left in undisturbed possession of the country they had occupied. While engaged in these operations, they had been hurriedly constructing a great road, the whole way from their capital in Koch Bihār, to Nārāyanpur, in the south-west of what is now the North Lakhimpur subdivision. It was completed in the following year, and the main body of the Koch army then moved forward to Nārāyanpur which they fortified. Suklenmung mustered all his available forces,

and took up and fortified a position on the bank of the Pichala river. Their communications being thus threatened, the Koches were forced, either to retreat at once, or to assume the offensive. They chose the latter alternative, and attempted to take the Ahom entrenchments by storm. They were repulsed with heavy loss, and in the disorderly retreat which followed, large numbers were surrounded and killed. By this single victory Suklenmung regained the whole of his lost territory; and he returned to his capital in triumph and performed the *Rikkhvān* ceremony.

Earthquake. The year 1548 was marked by a terrible earthquake. The earth opened in many places, and sand, ashes and pebbles were poured forth. In the same year Dighalmar Sāndhikai formed a conspiracy against the king. The plot was discovered and all the conspirators were put to death. Soon afterwards the Bānpara Nāgas invoked the aid of the Ahom king against the Bānchāng Nāgas. This was given. The Bānchāng Nāgas were defeated; their chief was made prisoner, and a number of buffaloes and bison and much other booty fell into the hands of the victors.

Suklenmung's death. In 1552 the king died. He seems always to have been delicate, and his health had been failing for some time. During his reign the Garhgāon tank was excavated; the Nāga Ali, which runs through the Gadhuli Bāzār Mauza from the Bar Ali to the Nāga hills, was constructed, and also the embankments at Kāhikuchi, and Chānginimukh.

He was the first Ahom ruler to strike coins, an innovation which, like many others, may be ascribed to the greater intercourse that now prevailed with the more civilized countries west of Assam.*

Sukhāmphā, 1552 to 1603. Suklenmung was succeeded by his son Sukhāmphā, who was also known as the Khora, or lame, Raja, owing to his having hurt his foot, while out hunting elephants, shortly after his accession. A plot was formed against him by seven princes of the blood. They were caught but, on the intercession of the Bar Gohāin, were released without punishment. This, for the Ahoms, unusual clemency failed

* A description of the Ahom kings' coinage will be found in Chapter IX.

to conciliate them. They rebelled again in 1559, and on this occasion they were all put to death. There was an expedition against the Aitonia Pāpuk and Khāmteng Nāgas in 1555. The enemy fled, and a large quantity of booty fell into the hands of the Ahoms, but, on their return journey, they were caught in an ambuscade and lost a number of men. In 1560 a chief, who is described as the grandson of a Bhuiyā named Pratāp Rāi, rose against the Ahoms and was joined by some other local chiefs, but he was defeated and slain in a battle fought near the mouth of the Dikhu river.

Fresh Koch invasions.

The Burhā Gohāin, Aikhek, was appointed Commander-in-Chief. In order to guard against fresh invasions from the west, elaborate fortifications were erected at Boka and Salā, and permanent garrisons were stationed at these places. In 1562 a dispute arose with the Koches, who were accused of pillaging some villages in Ahom territory in the course of their operations against the Kachāris, and a Koch army under a general named Tipu ascended the Brahmaputra in boats as far as the mouth of the Dikhu. The Ahoms advanced against them in great strength, and the Koches fell back to the mouth of the Handia river, where an engagement took place in which the Ahoms appear to have been worsted.

In the following January, Chilārāi himself took the field, and advanced with a large force up the Brahmaputra, as far as the mouth of the Dikhu. In the battle that ensued the Ahoms were routed. The king with his nobles fled to Charāikharang in Nāmrup, while the Koches spread over the country and plundered the people in all directions. In some of the *Buranjis*, the ineffectual resistance offered to Chilārāi is accounted for by the statement that the Ahom king was greatly alarmed by an adverse omen. While he was bathing, a kite (Chila) carried off one of his ornaments which was lying on the bank, and this was interpreted as foreboding the success of Chilārāi, "the king of the kites." After his victory Chilārāi entered Garhgāon, the capital, and pitched his camp there.

Conclusion of peace.

Three months later, the Burhā Gohāin, Aikhek, was deputed to sue for peace. This was granted on the following conditions, *viz.*:—the acknowledgment of the Koch supremacy, the cession of a considerable tract of country on

the north bank of the Brahmaputra, the delivery of a number of sons of the chief nobles as hostages, and the payment, as a war indemnity, of sixty elephants, sixty pieces of cloth and a large quantity of gold and silver. In the autumn, after these conditions had been complied with, Chilārāi returned to his own country, leaving a garrison at Nārāyanpur to hold the ceded territory on the north bank. As soon as he had departed, Sukhāmphā proceeded to his capital and at once took vigorous steps to repair losses and restore order. An enquiry was made into all the circumstances attending the reverses which the Ahoms had sustained, and the conclusion was arrived at that they were due to gross neglect to take proper steps for the defence of the country on the part of Aikhek, the Burhā Gohāin, who was in consequence dismissed from his appointment. One Kankham was appointed in his place, and was given strict injunctions to repair the forts, mount cannon where necessary, and re-organize the military arrangements in such a way as to enable future invasions to be repelled. A strong fort was erected at the mouth of the Dikhu. Soon afterwards Nārāyanpur was recovered from the Koches. Salā was next occupied by a strong force, and a fort was constructed there. In 1564 the hostages taken by the Koch king were returned. The common tradition is that they obtained their freedom owing to the success of one of their number in a game of dice with Nar Nārāyan, but in a *Buranji* of the Koch kings it is said that the release of the hostages was decided on by Nar Nārāyan after his defeat by the Gaur Padshah, in order to obtain the Ahom king's friendship, and to avert an attack at a time when resistance would have been difficult. If this story can be relied on, it affords an explanation of the ease with which the Ahoms recovered their lost territory on the north bank. It is said that a number of Koch artisans accompanied the Ahom hostages on their return to their own country. Amongst them were potters skilled in the art of making images of Durgā and other Hindu deities.

Hostilities with Chutiyas and others.

In 1563 the Chutiyas made a raid into Nāmrup and Tipām, and the Tipām Raja fled, after his elephant had been wounded by arrows in three places. The Bar Sāndhikai marched to Sadiya and defeated the Chutiyas, killing a

thousand of them, and taking three thousand prisoners. In spite of this lesson, they raided again in 1572, when another punitive expedition was despatched, and heavy losses were again inflicted on them.

In January 1563 a Dhekeri Raja invaded the country, accompanied by two sons of the Ahom Dekā Raja, or heir-apparent, who had rebelled and gone to him for protection. He was attacked and defeated at Murābhagā, and fled in a boat, leaving his elephants, weapons, etc., to be captured by the Ahoms. The heads of the slain were piled up in heaps at Kāhikusi and Nārāyanpur. One of the sons of the Dekā Raja was killed in the battle, and the other was taken prisoner and put to death. It it not clear who this Dhekeri Raja was. His name is variously given as Pamān, Parān, and Thikmān. The term Dhekeri (awkward) is now applied to the Assamese of Mangaldai and the Nowgong Chāpari, but, at the period in question, the term appears to have been used to designate the inhabitants of the latter tract only.

In the following month another expedition is recorded against a chief named Bhelā Raja, whom also it is impossible to identify. He was defeated and captured, and his capital was occupied by the Ahoms.

In July of the same year the Koch commander Tipu again led an invading force up the Brahmaputra. He halted on the bank of the river for two months, and was then attacked by the Ahoms and decisively beaten. The Koches gave no further trouble until 1570, when Tipu and one Bhitaruāl brought up an army. An Ahom force was despatched to repel it, and engaged the enemy at the mouth of the Dhansiri. The Koches were defeated, and fled with the loss of many men, boats and cannon.

An expedition was undertaken in 1569 against a Nāga named Phusenta, who was defeated and fled to Pāpuk. In 1573 the country of the Aitonia Nāgas was invaded and much booty was taken.

In 1574 there was a virulent epidemic of small-pox in the course of which many people died.

Narā War. In 1576 the Narā Raja of Mungkang advanced with an army to Khāmjāng. The Ahoms entrenched themselves at Pangrāo, but hostilities were averted by a treaty under which

Sukhāmphā undertook to pay 16,000 rupees to the Narā Raja, who, in return, promised to give him his daughter in marriage. The money was paid, but the Narā Raja sent his sister, instead of his daughter, to Sukhāmphā, who thereupon deputed three men to abduct the daughter. They were caught, and, when the Narā Raja learnt that they had been despatched under Sukhāmphā's orders, he at once invaded Nāmrup. His troops defeated an Ahom army on the bank of the Ruram river, but were vanquished in a subsequent engagement near the Sessa river and fled, hotly pursued by the Ahoms.

Relations with the Koches.

In 1577 three men named Gābhāru Nāik, Bardādo and Barkāth rebelled against the Koch king Nar Nārāyan, but failed in their attempt, and fled with 1,400 men to Sukhāmphā, who accorded them his protection and settled them at Gajalā. In 1585 the Koch king Raghu Deb gave his daughter Sankalā in marriage to Sukhāmphā, with a dowry of two elephants, seven horses and a hundred domestics.* Sukhāmphā in return, presented him with twenty-two elephants and twelve horses.

Earthquake.

There was another bad earthquake in 1596. Hot water, sand and ashes were thrown up from below. One of the king's palaces collapsed and some of the men who were guarding it were crushed to death.

Sukhāmphā's death.

Sukhāmphā died at Khowang in 1603 after a reign of 51 years. During the earlier years of his reign, several plots were formed against him, but they were all detected in time. He married a number of wives, and there were various scandals in the royal harem. On one occasion three men were beheaded on account of an intrigue in which one of the queens was concerned. This monarch was very fond of sport, and was frequently present at the *kheddas* when elephant catching operations were in progress. He was very unlucky in his palaces. One, which he built at Sonāpur, was struck by lightning, and another at Salakhtali was destroyed by fire.

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* In one *Buranji* it is said that Nar Nārāyan had promised a daughter to Sukhāmphā, but died before she could be sent, and that his son Lakshmi Nārāyan evaded fulfilment of the promise on seeing the friendship which had sprung up between the Ahom king and Raghu Deb.

The collapse of a third in the earthquake of 1596 has already been mentioned. Two unusual occurrences are recorded in this reign. In 1569 a swarm of locusts appeared and did great damage, and in 1570 there was a flood which destroyed the crops and caused something like a famine.

The propagation of Vaishnava tenets was continued by the disciples of Sankar Deb and Mādhab Deb, who wandered all over the country and founded numerous *sattras*. Many common people, and even some of the highest officials, openly joined the ranks of the Mahāpurushias.

Dates of kings from Khorā Raja to Jayadhvaj Singh.

From Sukāphā to the accession of Khorā Raja, *alias* Sukhāmphā, in 1552 A.D. there is complete agreement in the matter of dates between the *Buranjis* and the printed accounts of Kāsināth, Robinson and Gunābhirām. From the death of Jayadhvaj Singh in 1663 they again agree, but the dates of the intermediate kings differ by several years in each case. According to Kāsināth, from whom Robinson and Gunābhirām apparently drew their information, Sukhāmphā died after a reign of fifty-nine years, and was succeeded in 1611 by Pratāp Singh, who was followed by Bhagā Raja in 1649, Nariya Raja in 1652 and Jayadhvaj Singh in 1654. The *Buranjis*, on the other hand, agree in ascribing to Sukhāmphā a reign of fifty-one years only, and place his death and Pratāp Singh's accession in 1603, the accession of Bhagā Raja in 1641, that of Naria Raja in 1644, and that of Jayadhvaj Singh in 1648. I prefer to accept the dates given in the *Buranjis* because they are the original records, and are all in complete accord.* It is much more likely that

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* A writer in the *Numismatic Chronicle* (Fourth Series, Vol. IX) disputes my conclusion on the strength of coins issued in 1648 A.D. by "Svarga Nārāyan Deb" whom he identifies with Pratāp Singh, This designation, however, is a title and not a name; it was used also by Suhungmung and other Ahom rulers prior to Chakradhvaj Singh, from whose time onwards it was usually replaced by the shorter "Svarga Deb," though it was still used occasionally, as in the inscriptions on the cannon of Chakradhvaj, Udayāditya and Gadādhar. Pratāp Singh's distinctive designation was "Buddha (the Wise) Svarga Nārāyan." With one exception, prior to the reign of Rudra Singh, Ahom kings issued coins only in the year of their accession. As 1648 A.D. is the year given in all the *Buranjis* for the accession of Jagadhvaj Singh, it may be regarded as certain that it was he and not Pratāp Singh who issued the coin under discussion. These considerations have already been pointed out by

Kāsināth made a mistake than that he should have had access to records (all of which have now disappeared) which proved that the dates given in all the surviving *Buranjis* are wrong. Again, the *Buranjis* are very accurate in all the dates which can be tested by reference to Muhammadan histories, *e.g.*, the Muhammadan wars of 1615, 1637 and 1662, and their correctness in respect of other dates may therefore be relied on. It may be added that some of them are very detailed; some event or other is narrated in almost every year of each reign, and the month and day of the month is also frequently stated. If the dates of accession were incorrect, all these dependent dates would also have to be rejected. Lastly, if Sukhāmphā did not die till 1611, he must have reigned for fifty-nine years, which would be an extraordinarily long period, being about four times the average duration of an Ahom king's reign.

Mr. A. W. Botham (J. A. S. B., 1914, p. 457). It was probably the same erroneous attribution of this coin to Pratāp Singh that led Kāsināth astray.

It may be added that the *Buranjis* of which translations were made for Wade (India Office MS.) which I had not seen when the the first edition of this work was prepared, agree in this respect with the *Buranjis* which were then known to me.

CHAPTER VI.

THE PERIOD OF THE MUHAMMADAN WARS.

Susengphā (Pratāp Singh), 1603 to 1641.

SUSENGPHA, one of the late king's three sons, succeeded him. Being already advanced in years when he became king, he was nicknamed the Burhā Raja. He was also known as Buddha Svarga Nārāyan, on account of his great wisdom, and as Pratāp Singh, because of the great deeds done during his reign. The last is the name by which he is best known.

Hostilities with the Kachāris.

Soon after his accession Jasa Mānik, Raja of Jaintia, who was on bad terms with the Kachāri Raja, Pratāp Nārāyan, endeavoured to embroil the Ahom king by offering him his daughter on condition that he fetched her by a route which led through the Kachāri country. Pratāp Singh sent messengers to Pratāp Nārāyan to ask for his assent, but the latter, having come to despise the power of the Ahoms since their defeat by Chilarāi, refused to give it, and shortly afterwards made a raid on a village inside the Ahom boundary. Incensed by his refusal and by the subsequent unprovoked aggression, Pratāp Singh determined to clear a road by force. In June 1606 he sent troops up the Kallang to Rahā and thence up the Kopili, where they defeated a tributary chief of the Kachāris. They proceeded *viâ* Hānān to Sātgāon and defeated the Kachāris at Dharamtika, capturing many guns, swords and spears. The main body of the Kachāris then retreated to Māibong, leaving a garrison in a fort at the junction of the Kopili and Marādoyang rivers. The Ahoms made an assault on this fort but were repelled. They entrenched themselves and sent word to Pratāp Singh, who in October led a fresh force up the Dhansiri valley, and occupied a fortified position at Demālāi. In November the Jaintia princess was successfully escorted from Jaintiapur to Rahā, and thence to the Ahom country. Pratāp Singh returned to his capital, and the bulk of his troops in Nowgong were withdrawn; but a strong garrison was left at Rahā in charge of a Gohāin named Sundar.

The latter demanded tribute of the Kachāris and said that if they failed to pay he would attack Māibong itself. In

the meantime Sundar's son Akhek poisoned his mind against the king, and he became indifferent to his duties. The Kachāris, under Bhim Darpa, their king's eldest son, took advantage of the slackness which now prevailed in the fort, to make a night attack, in which Sundar and many other Ahoms were killed, and the rest were put to flight.

Pratāp Singh was greatly enraged on receiving news of this disaster, but he foresaw the approach of renewed hostilities with the Muhammadans and was unwilling to weaken his resources by continuing the struggle with the Kachāri king. He therefore sent him a pacific message and presents, and said that Sundar Gohāin, in attacking him, had disobeyed orders. Pratāp Nārāyan accepted the explanation and asked for an Ahom princess in marriage. He was given a daughter of one of the chief nobles, who was escorted by the Burhā Gohāin to his capital. Soon afterwards it became known that Akhek Gohāin who, in the meantime, had been placed in command at Dikhumukh, was partly responsible for the disaster at Rahā. Being dismissed from his post, he began to tamper with the local chiefs on the north bank of the Brahmaputra, who are said to have offered to make him their king, but, at the last moment, his courage failed him and he fled, first to Parikshit, ruler of the eastern Koch kingdom, and then to the Muhammadan governor of Bengal.

In 1608 Pratāp Singh obtained in marriage Mangaldāhi, the daughter of the Koch king Parikshit. He gave twenty-three elephants to Parikshit, and the latter sent with his daughter, six families of domestics and twenty female slaves.

Muhammadan invasion.

In 1615 Bali Nārāyan, the brother of Parikshit, who had just been defeated by the Muhammadans, as narrated in the account of the Koch kings, fled for shelter to Pratāp Singh, who received him cordially.* About the same time a Mussalman trader was murdered near Koliābar, on suspicion of being a spy, and his two boats were looted. Shekh Qāsim, the governor of Bengal, decided on a punitive expedition and sent Saiad Hakim, an imperial officer, and

* The Muhammadan accounts of these operations are contained in the *Pādishāhnāmah*, II, p. 64 ff. and in the *Bahāristān-i-Ghaibi*.

Saiad Abā Bakr with upwards of ten thousand horse and foot and four hundred large ships to invade the Ahom country. They were accompanied by Sattrajit, the son of a zamindar living near Dacca, who had fought in the army sent against Parikshit and, as a reward for his services, had been made thānādār of Pāndu and Gauhāti. Akhek Gohāin also went with the expedition.

The invaders reached Koliabar by way of the Kallang river. The Ahoms met them at the mouth of the Bharali, but the Mughals, having taken advantage of a fog to cross their horses over the river in boats, won the first battle. They did not follow up their victory, and another Ahom army soon reached the Bharali. Its commander was afraid to attack, and remained inactive, in spite of stringent orders to the contrary from Pratāp Singh. He was superseded, and his successor, acting on the advice of Akhek Gohāin, who had deserted from the enemy on receiving a promise of pardon, surprised the Muhammadans in a night attack, both by land and water, and totally defeated them. The fugitives were overtaken and surrounded, and Saiad Abā Bakr and many other leaders were either killed in the battle or captured and put to death.* Sattrajit's son, who was among the prisoners, was sacrificed to the goddess Kāmākhyā. The heads of the slain were piled up in heaps. An immense amount of booty fell into the hands of the Ahoms, including elephants, horses, and a large number of warships, boats, cannon, guns and other munitions of war. Pratāp Singh returned to his capital in triumph and performed the *Rikkhvān* ceremony.

Bali Nārāyan was now installed as tributary Raja of Darrang, with the title Dharma Nārāyan. His capital was established at a place on the south bank of the Brahmaputra, which formed part of Darrang, as the term was then understood. The promise of pardon made to Akhek was

* In the *Bahāristān-i-Ghaibi*, it is said that 5,000 Muhammadans were killed or died of their wounds, 9,000 were captured and 3,000 fled from the field. Of the latter about 2,000 were rescued by a relief expedition sent up from Hājo.

afterwards revoked, and he suffered the death penalty. The author of the *Pādishāhnāmah* says that this disaster led to the deposition of Qāsim Khān from his office as governor of Bengal.

History of Dimarua Rajas.

In November, 1617, Pratāp Singh advanced with an army towards Hājo, accompanied by Dharma Nārāyan. Other chiefs made their submission to him as he advanced. Amongst their number was the Dimarua Raja, and this opportunity may be taken to give a brief outline of his history. His ancestor Panthesvar was originally a tributary chief of the Kachāris, but, owing to their oppression, he fled with his followers to Nar Nārāyan, who established him on the Jaintia frontier with jurisdiction over a tract inhabited by about 18,000 people. His son Chakradhvaj was imprisoned for neglecting to pay tribute, but was released on the intercession of Raghu Deb, the king's nephew, and was restored to his principality when the latter became the ruler of the eastern Koch kingdom. His descendants, Poāl Singh, Ratnākar and Prabhākar paid tribute to Raghu Deb's son, Parikshit. The Jaintia Raja, Dhan Mānik, subsequently arrested Prabhākar and confined him in Jaintiapur. Prabhākar invoked the aid of the Kachāri king, who demanded his release and, failing to obtain it, attacked Dhan Mānik and defeated him. Prabhākar's son Mangal, who succeeded him, sought and obtained the protection of the Ahoms. It was well for him that he did so, as it was shortly afterwards the means of saving him from capture by the Kachāri Bhimbal.

Pratāp Singh attacks the Muhammadans.

Accompanied by these chiefs, Pratāp Singh attacked and took Pāndu, which he fortified; and the Musalmans, after sustaining a defeat at Agiathuti, retreated to Hājo. Their commander Abdussalām reported the state of affairs to the Nawāb of Dacca, and asked for help, and his brother Muhiuddin was sent to his assistance with a thousand horse, a thousand matchlock men and over two hundred boats and war sloops.

Meanwhile the Ahoms continued to occupy the positions which they had already taken up. Their instructions were to postpone further action until the receipt of orders from the king, but the appearance of a few Muhammadan horse

soldiers was too much for some of the hot-headed commanders, and they pursued them to Hājo.* This place was then assaulted on all sides, by the Ahoms in front, and in the rear by the local levies led by Dharma Nārāyan and a chief named Jadu, who is called by some writers a Chutiya and by others a Kachāri. The attack failed; and the Ahoms retreated to Srighāt, closely followed by the Muhammadans, who defeated them in several engagements. The Burhā Gohāin was taken prisoner; a large number of soldiers were killed and wounded, and nine elephants and many ships and guns were captured by the enemy. On receiving news of this disaster, Pratāp Singh ordered his scattered forces to rally at Sāmdhara. An enquiry was made, and the officers responsible for the neglect of the king's orders were beheaded or starved to death. According to one account the Bar Gohāin and Sāring Raja were deprived of their offices and confined in the royal pigsties.

Creation of posts of Bar Phukan and Bar Barua.

Lāngi Pānisiya, who had distinguished himself by rallying the fugitive soldiers and restoring orders amongst them, was rewarded by being given the newly-created post of Bar Phukan, or governor of the conquered provinces west of Koliābar. The tracts east of Koliābar outside the jurisdictions of the Bar Gohāin and Burhā Gohāin were at the same time placed under the administration of another new functionary known as the Bar Barua. The first incumbent of this post was Māmāi Tāmuli, the King's uncle.

In September, 1619, hostilities were renewed by the Musalmans, who besieged Dharma Nārāyan in his fort on the south bank of the Brahmaputra. An Ahom force was sent to his assistance and took up a position near that of the Muhammadans. For six weeks the two armies faced each other. The Ahoms then forced an engagement, in which the Muhammadans were worsted; large numbers were killed, and the rest fled to Hājo, leaving ten cannon, fifty guns and many other weapons, as well as some horses, buffaloes and cattle, in the hands of the Ahoms. After the battle, Dharma

* The best Muhammadan accounts of these operations are those of the *Pādishāhnāmah* (II pp. 64 ff.) and the *Bahāristān-i-Ghaibi.* In the latter work it is said that the attack was ordered by Pratāp Singh, although he had been told that the omens were adverse.

Nārāyan and a number of frontier chiefs, including those of Dimarua and Hojāi, again made their submission to Pratāp Singh. The latter, it is said, endeavoured to induce the Raja of Koch Bihār to make common cause with him against the Muhammadans, but his overtures were rejected.

Peace overtures by the Muhammadans.

Both parties now seem to have grown tired of the war; and Lakshmi Nārāyan, Raja of Koch Bihār, with the consent of the Nawāb of Dacca, sent one Biro Kāzi to Pratāp Singh to offer his services as mediator. Biro Kāzi was kept in confinement, but the news of the effort to open negotiations reached Sattrajit, the Thānādar of Pāndu. This man's loyalty to the Muhammadans was doubtful; and he had for some time evaded the payment of the stipulated tribute. He was afraid of what would happen to himself if the Muhammadans were to make peace with the Ahoms, and he accordingly sent men to Lāngi Bar Phukan to signify his desire to be accepted as his friend. He exchanged presents with Pratāp Singh and sent his five-year old son to pay him homage. But Sattrajit was a traitor by nature, and, as he had been false to the Muhammadans, so now he intrigued with the officials of the Ahoms. The Nawāb of Dacca sent fresh messengers to Pratāp Singh, but the Bar Phukan, at Sattrajit's instigation, misrepresented the object of their visit, and they were accordingly sent back without obtaining an audience of the king.

At this juncture, one Māsu Gobind, after conspiring against the king, fled to Luki. Sattrajit promised to arrest him, but, instead of doing so, he gave him warning and allowed him to escape to Bengal. This greatly enraged Pratāp Singh, and he sent orders to the Bar Phukan to seize Sattrajit. A meeting was arranged, and the two met on the island of Umānanda, opposite Gauhāti. They embraced each other and exchanged presents. The Bar Phukan then allowed Sattrajit, who had gained a considerable influence over him, to depart without attempting to effect his arrest. The king, being informed of this, and also of the Bar Phukan's duplicity in the matter of the envoys from Dacca, caused him to be chained in a dungeon, where he was left to starve to death. Neog succeeded him as Bar Phukan, and the war came to an end.

Another expedition.

After some years, the relations of the Ahoms with the Nawāb again became strained. The author of the *Pādishāhnāmah* blames Sattrajit for this, saying that, on the occasion of Islām Khān's appointment to Bengal, he made common cause with Dharma Nārāyan, and instigated him to profit by the change of governors and push forward his boundary, so as to include the south-eastern parganas of the modern district of Goālpāra. There were also other causes of friction. Some Muhammadan subjects were killed in Ahom territory, but Pratāp Singh disclaimed all knowledge of the occurrence and refused to give redress. A defaulting fiscal officer under the Nawāb, named Harikesh, was given shelter by Pratāp Singh, who refused to surrender him, alleging that the Nawāb had similarly taken under his protection fugitives from his kingdom. This led to a fresh war. A force was despatched in 1635 to seize Harikesh by force, but it was opposed by the Ahoms and defeated near the Bharali river.

The Ahoms assume the offensive.

Pratāp Singh now determined to carry the war into the enemy's territory. He sent presents to the chiefs of Dimarua, Hojāi, Barduār and other frontier tracts and induced them to join.* He also succeeded in attaching to his cause the chiefs of about ten thousand soldier cultivators, or *pāiks*, who had been settled by Qāsim Khān in Kāmrup. His troops soon reduced the Muhammadan forts at Deomiha, Bantikot, Chamaria and Nāgarberā, after which they entrenched themselves at Pāringa, on the bank of the Kulsi river, and at Niubihā, which had been evacuated by the Muhammadan garrison on their approach. In the course of the operations a Musalman general and many soldiers were killed and a great quantity of booty was captured. Hājo was now invested, and the Muhammadans were defeated in several engagements, in one of which they lost 360 cannon and guns, as well as other stores.†

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* The chiefs of the Duārs enumerated by Kāsinath include those of Rāni, Luki, Bako, Bagāi, Bangāon, Chhaygāon, Pāntan, Barduār, Bholāgāon and Māyāpur.

† According to the *Buranjis*, Sattrajit now sued for peace and there was a cessation of hostilities for some months, but there is no mention of this in the Muhammadan accounts of the war.

In the meantime, Abdussalām, the Musalman governor of Hājo, had sent an urgent request for reinforcements to the Nawāb, Islām Khān, who despatched to his assistance one thousand horse and one thousand matchlock men, under Saiad Zainul-ābidin, together with two hundred and ten war sloops and boats and a large supply of ammunition, weapons and money. On the arrival of these reinforcements, it was arranged that Abdussalām should remain in occupation of Hājo, whilst Zainul-ābidin endeavoured to push his ships as far as Srighāt in order to keep the Ahoms at bay. The first engagement was fought a little to the west of Pāndu, and the Ahoms, who had left their fortified camps and advanced to the attack, were defeated, after a severe fight, with the loss of four ships and a few cannon. The Bar Phukan's son, who commanded the Ahom troops, was shot whilst trying to rally his men. Their two camps were promptly destroyed by the Muhammadans, and two days later they were driven from Agiathuti. Their fort at Srighāt was then besieged. For three days they kept the Muhammadans at bay, but on the arrival of twenty sloops with fresh troops, the latter renewed the attack, and the Ahoms, whose ammunition was running short, were forced to retreat. When the news of these reverses reached Pratāp Singh, he at once despatched strong reinforcements. On their arrival, the Ahoms once more advanced and drove the Muhammadan fleet back to Suālkuchi. It is recorded in one of the *Buranjis* that a Feringi, or European, in the service of the Muhammadans, who had gone off by himself to shoot birds, was captured and sent to the Ahom king. This is the first instance recorded of a European entering Ahom territory. At this juncture, the branch of the Brahmaputra which flows past Hājo dried up, and as this rendered mutual succour in case of attack impossible, Abdussalām sent orders to Zainul-ābidin to join him at Hājo. This he did, leaving the fleet in charge of Muhammad Sālih Kambu, Sattrajit and Majlis Bāyazid.

Reinforcements sent from Dacca.

The same night the Ahoms, with nearly five hundred ships, attacked the hostile fleet and gained a decisive victory. Muhammad Sālih was killed, Bāyazid was made prisoner, and the greater part of the fleet fell into the hands of the

Muhammadans driven from Assam.

victors. This disaster is ascribed by the author of the *Pādishāhnāmah* to the perfidy of Sattrajit, who is accused of having informed the Ahoms of the departure of the Muhammadan leader, and of having retired with his own ships as soon as the attack began. The Ahom chroniclers state that three hundred boats of all sizes and three hundred cannon and guns were captured, as well as other spoils.

Hājo was now closely invested by the Bar Phukan and Dharma Nārāyan. All supplies were cut off, and the defenders were reduced to great straits. They made several unsuccessful sallies, in one of which Abdussalām was wounded. For some time they subsisted on their pack bullocks and camels, but at last, when these had disappeared, Abdussalām agreed to surrender, and he and his brother went to the Ahom camp with a considerable portion of his forces. They were at once arrested and taken before Pratāp Singh, who ordered them to be sent up-country. The leaders were settled at Silpāni and other places, and were given land and slaves, while the common soldiers were distributed as slaves among the Baruas, Phukans and other Ahom nobles. Saiad Zainul-ābidin, with the rest of the garrison, refused to give in. They made a gallant attempt to force their way through the enemy, but were all killed.

A great quantity of loot was taken at Hājo, including two thousand guns and seven hundred horses. The brick buildings which the Muhammadans had erected were all levelled with the ground. It subsequently transpired that, while they were besieged in Hājo, the Muhammadan leaders, with a view to obtaining favourable terms of surrender, had sent to the Bar Phukan, for transmission to the king, a number of pearls and other valuable articles, and that these had been misappropriated by the Bar Phukan, who had also taken fifty families of weavers from Suālkuchi and settled them in the northern part of his own jurisdiction instead of sending them to Upper Assam. For these offences he was arrested and put to death.

The remaining Musalman garrisons in Kāmrup were attacked and captured in turn, and, in a great part of the Goālpāra district also, the Muhammadan yoke was

thrown off. Chandra Nārāyan, a son of the Koch king Parikshit and the founder of the Bijni family, with the aid of a detachment of Ahom troops sent to him by Pratāp Singh, established himself at Hatsila in Karāibāri, on the south bank of the Brahmaputra. Many of the zamindars on the north bank made their submission to the Ahoms.

But a fresh army from Dacca restores their ascendancy.

Before these events occurred, the Nawāb of Dacca had collected fifteen hundred horse and four thousand matchlock men, together with large stores of grain, ammunition, weapons and money, and proposed to march in person to the relief of Abdussalām. But his presence being required in Dacca, he entrusted the command of the expedition to his brother Mir Zainuddin, who set out with an escort of twenty-five war sloops. The long river journey was slow and tedious; and before he was able to reach Assam, the events already described had taken place. The news of these disasters did not dismay him, and he at once took vigorous steps to restore the Muhammadan supremacy in Lower Assam. According to some accounts, he was accompanied by Prān Nārāyan, Raja of Koch Bihār. He marched against Chandra Nārāyan, who fled without waiting to be attacked, and all the Goālpāra zamindars on the south bank of the river submitted.

He then crossed to the north bank and, after obtaining the submission of the leading zamindars, retraced his steps to Dhubri, where he found Sattrajit and some convoy ships which he had managed to detain. Having obtained clear proof of Sattrajit's treachery on various occasions, he arrested him and sent him to Dacca, where he was imprisoned and afterwards executed.

Meanwhile the Ahoms were preparing to resist his advance up the river. They collected a force of twelve thousand foot, including their Koch auxiliaries, and a numerous fleet. They took up a position at Jogighopā on the north bank of the Brahmaputra and at Hirāpur on the opposite side of the river, their fleet being anchored in mid-stream between these two forts. Several engagements took place, and in the end the Ahoms were defeated. In one of these fights Chandra Nārāyan was killed. The

Muhammadans then crossed the Monās,* and encamped at Chandankot for the rainy season, when it was impossible to carry out extended operations on land. Their forces had by this time been considerably augmented by the remnants of the old garrisons and by the levies of the local zamindars, who returned to their allegiance as Zainuddin advanced. In the *Buranjis* his army is spoken of as "a great host," but its actual strength is not stated. A flying column of five thousand men was despatched, under Muhammad Zamān, the Faujdār of Sylhet, to eject the Ahoms from the south bank; and when this had been accomplished, the same officer was sent with a strong detachment to reinstate Uttam Nārāyan in his zamindari at Barnagar on the Monās, whence he had been driven by three thousand Ahoms and Koches. He crossed the Pomāri river and advanced towards Barnagar, whereupon the Ahoms withdrew to Chothri at the foot of the Bhutān Hills. Muhammad Zamān now entrenched himself at Bishenpur to await the close of the rainy season and get his war material into order. Soon afterwards, the Ahoms, having received reinforcements which brought their strength up to forty thousand men, advanced to the Kalāpāni, about three miles from his encampment, and threw up entrenchments. They made several night attacks on the Muhammadans and, by erecting palisades all round their camp, cut off all their supplies. No regular engagement occurred until the close of the rains, when the main body of the Muhammadans left Chandankot and marched on Bishenpur. The Ahom generals, seeing the advisability of doing something before the two hostile forces could effect a junction, and having received an additional reinforcement of twenty thousand men, made an attack in force on Muhammad Zamān's position. This was on the night of the 31st of October 1637. They carried two of his stockades, but next morning he again drove them out and, attacking in his turn, took in succession fifteen stockades which had been erected by them. They retreated to Pomāri, with the loss of four

* In the Muhammadan records and in Major Rennell's Journal this river is called Banās; in the map attached to Pemberton's *Report on the Eastern Frontier* it is written both ways.

thousand men and several generals, as well as a number of matchlocks and other weapons.*

The Muhammadans now united their forces and, three weeks later, made an attack from three different directions on the Ahom army, which had entrenched itself at Bārepaita. The Ahoms ran short of ammunition and sustained a crushing defeat; a very large number were killed, including several of the leaders, and many others were made prisoners and were subsequently put to death. The pursuit continued as long as daylight lasted. The scattered remnant fled to Srighāt, where Pratāp Singh was encamped with the fleet and the heavy baggage.

Ahom army defeated at Bārepaita

After this decisive victory the Muhammadans advanced to Pāndu. They captured the Ahom fort at Agiathuti in spite of a furious but ineffectual cannonade. Srighāt was next taken, and a naval engagement took place, which was every whit as disastrous to the Ahoms as the land battle at Bārepaita. Nearly five hundred sloops and three hundred guns fell into the hands of the victors. The Kājali fort at the mouth of the Kallang was also captured, but it was soon afterwards retaken by the Dimarua Raja and a chief named Hari Deka. Pratāp Singh sent a small force to assist them in holding it, and they succeeded in doing so, until they allowed themselves to be drawn into an action on open ground. They were then defeated, and fled to Koliābar, which was now the rallying point for the Ahom forces.

and their navy at Srighāt.

When the news of this defeat reached the Ahom king, he was so much alarmed that he prepared for flight to the hills and removed his valuables from the capital; he also put to death the Muhammadan leaders who had been made prisoners in previous battles.

* The above account of the operations of Muhammad Zamān in the direction of Barnagar follows that given in the *Pādishāh-nāmah*, which is also my authority for the strength of the Ahom forces engaged. According to the *Buranjis*, the Muhammadans retreated on the arrival of the first Ahom reinforcements and occupied three positions at Jakhālikhāna, Bhabānipur, and Bhātākuchi. The Ahoms entrenched themselves on the Kalāpāni and succeeded in reducing the forts at Jakhālikhāna and Bhabānipur. They also captured Bhātākuchi, but the next morning it was retaken by the Muhammadans after a very sanguinary encounter in which many soldiers perished on both sides. The Ahoms then retreated to Pomāri.

The Muhammadans now sent a detachment in pursuit of Dharma Nārāyan, who was reduced to great straits and fled to Singiri Parbat, where he and his two sons were eventually killed. During the next three months, the Muhammadans consolidated their rule in Kāmrup and effected a financial settlement of the country. Mir Nurullah of Harāt was appointed Thānādār, with his head-quarters at Gauhāti.

Unsuccessful invasion of Upper Assam.

In 1638 a Muhammadan force, accompanied by Prān Nārāyan, the Raja of Koch Bihār, ascended the Brahmaputra and encamped at the mouth of the Bharali. The Ahoms entrenched themselves on the opposite bank. Hostilities continued for some time, but eventually the invaders were defeated and retired to Gauhāti. It is stated in some of the *Buranjis* that, in order to gain time, the Ahoms made proposals of peace, and offered to supply elephants, aloes wood and other articles. An armistice was granted to permit of the king being consulted: in the meantime the entrenchments were completed, and the Bar Barua, who was in command, then informed the Muhammadans that he would sooner fight than agree to pay tribute. After their victory, the Ahoms reoccupied Kājali, but the prolonged campaign had exhausted their resources and they were unable to continue the war.

Conclusion of peace.

A treaty was therefore negotiated, under which the Bar Nadi, on the north bank of the Brahmaputra, and the Asurar Ali, on the south, were fixed as the boundary between the Ahom and the Muhammadan territories. During the next twenty years, the country west of this boundary line remained in the undisputed possession of the Muhammadans, and traces of the system of administration introduced by them survive to this day.

Relations with Kachāris.

The Kachāri King Bhimbal, died in 1637 and was succeeded by his son Indra Ballabh, who sent envoys to Pratāp Singh to enlist his friendship. His advances were coldly received, as it was thought that his letter was not couched on sufficiently respectful terms. This, like all subsequent communications between the two nations, was carried *viâ* Koliābar and not by the old route along the valley of the Dhansiri. That valley had been depopulated in the course of the repeated wars, and it was already becoming

overgrown with the jungle which now forms the Nâmbar forest.

Pratāp Singh's death; character and miscellaneous events of reign.

Pratāp Singh died in the year 1641 after a reign of 38 years. He was a capable, energetic and ambitious prince; and, although a great part of his reign was distracted by wars with the Kachāris and Muhammadans, he was still able to devote much attention to the internal organization of his kingdom, the development of backward tracts and the construction of roads, embankments and tanks. There were several conspiracies during the first few years after his accession, which were repressed with the ferocious severity customary amongst the Ahoms. The petty chiefs or Bhuiyās, who occupied the tract on the north bank of the Brahmaputra, between the Bharali and the Subansiri, had discontinued the payment of tribute from the time of the Koch invasion under Sukladhvaj; and in 1623 one of their number named Uday declared himself independent and was joined by several other chiefs. He was arrested and executed, and Pratāp Singh took the opportunity to break the power of the Bhuiyās for ever. He transferred them and their principal supporters to various places on the south bank of the Brahmaputra and forbade them to cross to the north bank on any pretext whatsoever; a number of men who, disregarding this order, went there to rear cocoons were put to death.

A census of the people was taken; and, where this had not already been done, they were divided off into clans, and officers were appointed over them. To protect the country on the Kachāri frontier, four hundred families of Ahoms from Abhaypur, Dihing and Nāmdāng were settled around Marangi. A number of families from the more thickly inhabited parts of Lower Assam were transferred to some of the sparsely populated tracts higher up the river, and the immigration of artisans of all kinds was encouraged. The country round the Dihing was opened out by roads to Charāideo and Dāuka. The towns of Abhaypur and Mathurapur were built; Jamirguri was surrounded by an embankment, and the palace at Garhgāon was protected in the same way. The want of an embankment as a line of defence having been experienced at the time of the Koch invasion under Sukladhvaj, the Lādaigarh was constructed

with this object. Another embankment known as the Dopgarh was thrown up as a means of protection against Nāga raids, and no Nāga was permitted to cross it, unless accompanied by a peon or *kataki*. Pratāp Singh had also proposed to construct an embankment along the Kachāri frontier, but refrained, upon the representation of his nobles, who urged that his kingdom in this direction was a growing one, and that it was inadvisable to do anything which would tend to confine it within fixed limits.

In order to stop the acts of oppression committed by the Miris and Daflas, *katakis* were appointed to watch them and keep the authorities informed of their movements. In this connection, however, it should be mentioned that in 1615, when reprisals were attempted after a raid perpetrated by these hillmen, the Ahom forces were obliged to beat a retreat.

Forts were erected at Sāmdhara, Safrai, Sita and many other places. A stone bridge was built over the Darikā river, and many bamboo bridges were constructed. Numerous markets were established, and trade flourished greatly during the interval of peace between the two great wars with the Muhammadans.

Like many of his predecessors, Pratāp Singh was much addicted to elephant hunting, and was frequently present at the *kheddas*. His ambition was to be the owner of a thousand elephants. When he had obtained this number, he assumed the title Gajpati (lord of elephants) and caused the town of Jamirguri to be renamed Gajpur in commemoration of the event. This circumstance is alluded to in the *Pādishāhnāmah*, where he is described as " an infidel who has a thousand elephants and a hundred thousand foot."

He kept a close eye on all branches of the administration and maintained his authority with a firm and heavy hand; punishment was meted out to all, even to the highest nobles, who were unfortunate enough to incur his displeasure. Some instances of his severity have already been given. Amongst others, the case of the Bharāli Barua may be mentioned. This man enjoyed the king's confidence to a very unusual degree, but he was nevertheless sentenced to death on proof of embezzlement and other misconduct.

During his reign the influence of the Brāhmans increased considerably. The Somdeo was still worshipped; and before a battle, it was still the practice to call upon the Deodhāis or tribal priests to tell the omens by examining the legs of fowls.* This, however, did not prevent the king from encouraging Hindu priests. When the tank at Misagārh was completed, Brāhmans were called in to consecrate it; temples for the worship of Siva were erected under the king's orders at Dergāon and Bishnāth, and grants of land were made for the maintenance of Brāhmans and of Hindu temples. It is recorded, however, tnat, on one occasion, shortly after gifts had been distributed to the Brāhmans, a son of the king died, and Pratāp Singh was so enraged in consequence that, for a time, he persecuted them, and even put some of them to death.

At the instigation of the Brāhmans the Mahāpurushias, whose tenets were rapidly gaining ground, were subjected to much persecution and several of their Gosāins or high priests were put to death.

The Ahom language continued to be the medium of conversation between the king and his nobles, but Hindus were often appointed as envoys (*bairāgis* and *katakis*) in preference to Ahoms, who were sometimes found wanting in intelligence.

Among the miscellaneous events of this reign may be mentioned a bad outbreak of cattle disease in 1618, which carried off many cows and buffaloes, and a flight of locusts in 1641, which spread all over the country from west to east, and caused such widespread devastation that a famine resulted from it. A great deal of damage was done by lightning; two palaces were destroyed in this way and also the house in which the Somdeo was kept, the temple at Bishnāth and the king's elephant house or *Falkhānā*.

The following interesting remarks on the Ahoms of this period are extracted from the *Pādishāhnāmah*† :—

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* The Ahoms were most superstitious, and on several occasions it is narrated that the king hastily left the house he was occupying merely because a screech owl had perched on it.

† *Apud* Blochmann, J. A. S. B., 1872, page 55.

"The inhabitants shave the head and clip off beard and whiskers. They eat every land and water animal. They are very black and loathsome in appearance. The chiefs travel on elephants or country ponies; but the army consists only of foot soldiers. The fleet is large and well fitted out. The soldiers use bows and arrows and matchlocks, but do not come up in courage to the Muhammadan soldiers, though they are very brave in naval engagements. On the march they quickly and dexterously fortify their encampments with mud walls and bamboo palisades, and surround the whole with a ditch."

Bhagā Raja (Surāmphā), 1641 to 1644.

During his mortal illness, Pratāp Singh was attended by his three sons Surāmphā, Sutyinphā and Sāi. The last mentioned, who was the youngest, collected a number of armed men in readiness to seize his brothers and force his way to the throne as soon as his father died, but the eldest, Surāmphā, after obtaining the support of his brother Sutyinphā, by saying that he himself was childless and promising to make him his heir, closed the gates of the city and disarmed and ejected the conspirators.

On Pratāp Singh's death, the chief nobles offered the throne to Sutyinphā, but he remained true to his word and refused to accept it over the head of his elder brother. Surāmphā was accordingly saluted as king. Soon afterwards Sāi conspired against him and was arrested and put to death.

Surāmphā was a man altogether destitute of the ordinary principles of morality. He first cohabited with one of his father's wives. Subsequently he fell in love with a married woman of the Chetia clan and, having caused her husband to be poisoned, took her to his harem. She adopted a nephew of her first husband, and this youth was declared heir-apparent by the king, who thereby broke the promise he had made to Sutyinphā at the time of his accession. The boy died soon afterwards, and one of Sutyinphā's sons was accused of having poisoned him. Sutyinphā was accordingly ordered to surrender him to be executed, and was deprived of all his possessions. At the same time the king, at the instigation of his paramour, called upon each of the chief nobles to furnish a son for burial with his adopted child.

Whether this order was actually carried into effect is not clear, but the result of it was to exasperate the nobles beyond endurance. Overtures were made to Sutyinphā, who agreed, though very reluctantly, to supersede his brother. The city was entered by a body of armed men, and Surāmphā, who was taken completely by surprise, was deposed and removed to a remote place in the hills, where he was eventually poisoned. Owing to his deposition, he is generally known as the Bhagā Raja.

The only occurrences in his reign worthy of mention are the construction of the Salaguri Road and the ignominious expulsion of some Kachāri envoys, who came to offer their king's congratulations on the occasion of his accession, because the letter which they brought was sealed with the seal of a Singh, and not of a Phukan, *i.e.*, of an independent ruler and not a subordinate chief.

There was a heavy flood in 1642, in which many cattle were washed away and drowned. Several earthquakes occurred in the same year.

Nariyā Raja (Sutyinphā), 1644 to 1648.

Sutyinphā, who now ascended the throne, was usually known as the Nariyā (sick) Raja on account of his indifferent health; he suffered from curvature of the spine, whence the nickname Kekora (crooked) was also sometimes applied to him. His installation was effected with great pomp. Amongst other amusements provided to celebrate the occasion, the people were entertained with the spectacle of fights between elephants, between an elephant and a tiger, and between a tiger and a crocodile. His first act was to put to death certain officials who were suspected of being opposed to his usurpation of the throne. Soon afterwards one of his wives, who was the sister of the Burhā Gohāin, persuaded him that the son of his chief queen was conspiring with her father, the Barpātra Gohāin. The son in question was invited to dinner by the king and treacherously put to death. The Barpātra Gohāin was also executed, and his daughter was deposed from her position as chief queen. This rank was then conferred on the woman who had made the mischief. She afterwards tried to poison the king's mind against another of his sons, named Khahua Gohāin, and instigated an unsuccessful attempt to murder him.

Expeditions against the Daflas.

In June 1646, an expedition was sent to subjugate the Daflas.* The troops ascended the Dikrāng and looted several villages, but they were much harassed by the Daflas, who fought with bows and arrows, and eventually retreated without achieving their object. The king was so enraged at the failure of the expedition that he dismissed the Burhā Gohāin and Barpātra Gohāin, who were in command, and to complete their disgrace, made them appear in public in female attire. In the following January, a second expedition was despatched; and the Daflas, who, aided by the Miris, ventured to fight a pitched battle, were utterly defeated. The expedition marched through their country, destroying the villages and granaries, and looting cattle to the number of about a thousand. These operations resulted in the full submission of the hillmen. In the same year the Tipām Raja, who had withheld the payment of tribute, was arrested and put to death; and an expedition was sent against the Khāmting Nāgas, which seems to have been fairly successful.

The king is deposed by his nobles.

Kukure Khowā Gohāin, the son of the chief queen, gave great dissatisfaction to the people by his cruelty, and at the same time alienated the nobles by his overbearing and insulting behaviour towards them. The king was asked to remonstrate with him, but he declined to do so. At the same time, the delicate state of his health prevented him from attending regularly to public business. He became increasingly unpopular; and eventually, in November 1648, he was deposed by the nobles, headed by the Burhā Gohāin, and his son Sutāmlā was made king in his stead.† A few days later he was poisoned; some say that his chief queen was buried alive in his grave, and others that she and her son were crushed to death. During this reign there was some

* The name of the tribe is given as "Singi" which I assume means Dafla. The Daflas call themselves "Sing" or "Nyising" and the locality described is that now inhabited by this tribe.

† So say Kāsināth and some of the *Buranjis*. Others, which are usually trustworthy, say that the king fell ill and, being neglected by all, expressed a wish to abdicate in favour of Sutāmlā, and that he died a natural death soon afterwards.

further discussion with the Kachāri king as to his status. The latter objected to being described as "established and protected by the Ahoms," but he seems to have waived his objections on being promised an Ahom princess in marriage.

Sutāmlā, on ascending the throne, assumed the Hindu name Jayadhvaj Singh. Owing to his flight from Garhgāon at the time of the Muhammadan invasion, which will be described further on, he is also known as the "Bhagania (fugitive) Raja." On the day of his accession the people were entertained with fights between wild animals. The Somdeo was placed on the throne; guns were fired, bands played and largess was distributed. Presents were also made to the Brāhmans. The Daflas, the Kachāri king and the Muhammadan governor at Gauhāti sent messages of congratulation and presents. The Raja of Jaintia, who did the same, coupled his felicitations with a request to be given back the provinces of Dimarua and Kuphanāli, which had been ceded the Ahoms, but his petition was refused.

Jayadhvaj Singh (Sutāmlā), 1648 to 1663.

The new king shared the fate of all usurpers, and several conspiracies were formed against him, which he repressed with ferocious severity. In one, the Burhā Gohāin was concerned, and he and his fellow conspirators were tortured to death by the barbarous expedient of placing live coals in their mouths. On another occasion the Bar Gohāin helped some of the persons implicated to make good their escape. As a punishment, he was stripped naked and whipped, and made to eat the flesh of his own son and was then tortured to death.

In 1650 an expedition was sent to punish the Lakma Nāgas for a raid committed by them. They were put to flight and a village was burnt, but the punishment was not sufficient to act as a deterrent. Fresh raids were perpetrated, and four years later a second expedition was found necessary. The Lakmas, armed with spears, made an unexpected attack on the Ahom troops, but were driven off by a detachment of Dafla archers that accompanied the force. A stockade was then taken, and many of the Nāgas who defended it were killed. Soon afterwards the Ahom force was again

Expeditions against Nāgas and Miris.

surprised, but the Lakmas failed to drive home their attack, and took refuge in the hills, whither the Ahom soldiers found it difficult to follow them, on account of the stony ground to which their bare feet were unaccustomed. The Nāgas now asked for a cessation of hostilities, and then treacherously attacked the envoy who was sent to treat with them. The Ahoms, after receiving reinforcements, renewed their advance. They were unable to come up with their nimble foes, but destroyed their houses and stores of grain. Eventually the Nāga chief came in and made his submission. He agreed to pay tribute, and in return was given a hill, the possession of which had previously been in dispute.

In 1655 the Miris made a raid and killed two Ahom subjects. The force sent against them defeated with considerable loss a body of three hundred Miris and burned twelve of their villages; the tribe then gave way and agreed to pay an annual tribute of bison, horses, tortoises, swords and yellow beads (probably amber), and gave up twelve men to the Ahoms in the place of the two whom they had killed.

Relations with Jaintia and Gobhā.

In 1647 the Raja of Jaintia seized an Ahom trader and, as he would not release him, Jayadhvaj Singh retaliated by arresting a number of Jaintia traders at Sonapur. This led to a cessation of all intercourse between the two countries for eight years. The Jaintia Raja then made overtures to the Bar Phukan at Gauhāti, and friendly relations were re-established.

In 1658 Pramata Rāi rebelled against his grandfather Jasa Manta Rāi, Raja of Jaintia, and called on the tributary chief of Gobhā to help him. The latter refused, and Pramata Rāi thereupon destroyed four of his villages. He appealed for help to the Kachāris, who were preparing to come to his assistance, when the local Ahom officials intervened and said that, as the Ahoms were the paramount power, it was they whose protection should be sought. The Gobhā chief accordingly went with seven hundred men to Jayadhvaj Singh and begged for help. Orders were issued to the Bar Phukan to establish him in Khāgarijān, corresponding more or less to the modern Nowgong, and this was accordingly done.

Shah Jahan, the Mughal Emperor of Delhi, fell sick in 1658, and Prān Nārāyan, Raja of Koch Bihār,* took advantage of the confusion caused by the wars of succession that followed, to throw off the Muhammadan yoke. He made raids into Goālpāra, and two of the local chiefs fled to Beltola, where Jayadhvaj Singh took them under his protection. Mir Lutfullah Shivazi, the Muhammadan Faujdār of Kāmrup and Hājo tried to oppose him, but the bulk of his troops had been withdrawn by Prince Shuja; he was defeated by Prān Nārāyan's army under his Vazir Bhabānāth, and retreated to Gauhāti. Ahoms conquer Lower Assam.

In the meantime Jayadhvaj Singh, who was also on the alert to take advantage of the dissensions amongst the Mughals, assembled a strong army, threw two bridges over the Kallang and advanced towards Gauhāti. On arriving, he found that the Faujdār had fled by boat to Dacca without waiting to be attacked. Twenty cannon and a number of horses, guns, etc., which there had been no time to remove, fell into his hands.† Prān Nārāyan now proposed an offensive and defensive alliance against the Muhammadans and a friendly division of their possessions in Assam, he taking the tract lying on the north bank of the Brahmaputra and the Ahoms that on the south. His advances were

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* In his analysis of the *Fathiyah-i-'Ibriyah* Blochmann calls this king Bhim Nārāyan, but he notes that some manuscripts have also Pem Nārāyan. There can be no doubt that the proper reading should be Prān Nārāyan. This is the name given in the Koch, as well as in the Ahom, chronicles. The author of the *Fathiyah-i-'Ibriyah* describes this ruler as a "noble, mighty king, powerful and fond of company. He never took his lip from the edge of the bowl nor his hand from the flagon; he was continually surrounded by singing women and was so addicted to the pleasures of the harem that he did not look after his kingdom. His palace is regal, has a *ghusulkhana*, a *darshan*, private rooms, accommodation for the harem, for servants, baths and fountains, and a garden. In the town there are flower-beds in the streets and trees to both sides of them. The people use the sword, firelock and arrows as weapons. The arrows are generally poisoned; their mere touch is fatal. Some of the inhabitants are enchanters; they read formulas upon water and give it to the wounded to drink, who then recover. The men and the women are rarely good-looking."

† A cannon formely in possession of Babu Saurendra Mohan Sinha, bears an inscription stating that it was taken by Jayadhvaj Singh from the Muhammadans whom he defeated at Gauhāti. [J. A. S. B., 1911, page 46.]

rejected by the Ahoms who were elated by their easy capture of Gauhāti. They marched against the Koches and, after a slight check, defeated them twice and drove them across the Sankosh. They thus became the masters of the whole of the Brahmaputra valley, and nearly three years elapsed before any effort was made by the Muhammadans to regain their lost territory. During this period, a number of the inhabitants of villages in Lower Assam were transported to the eastern provinces. According to the *Ālamgirnāmah* the Ahoms, not content with their conquest of the whole of the Brahmaputra valley, plundered and laid waste the country to the south of it, almost as far as Dacca itself.

Mir Jumlah's invasion of Assam.

When Mir Jumlah was made governor of Bengal, and had occupied Dacca after the flight of Prince Shuja to Arakan, Jayadhvaj Singh sent an envoy to him to say that he had taken possession of the country solely in order to protect it from the Koches, and that he was prepared to hand it over to any officer whom the governor might send for the purpose.

Rashid Khān was accordingly deputed to receive back the Imperial lands. On his approach, the Ahoms abandoned Dhubri, and fell back beyond the Monās river, but he suspected a snare and waited for reinforcements before taking possession of the tract which they had abandoned. When the Ahom king heard of the retreat of his troops, he caused the two Phukans who were responsible for it to be arrested and put in chains, and appointed the Bāduli Phukan to be Neog Phukan and Commander-in-Chief. He also ordered the Jogighopā fort at the mouth of the Monās to be strengthened and a new fort to be constructed on the opposite bank of the Brahmaputra, and sent a letter to Rashid Khān calling upon him to withdraw his troops. These matters were duly reported to Mir Jumlah who, in the meantime, had taken the field in person against Prān Nārāyan. When appointed Viceroy of Bengal, he had been specially enjoined by Auranzeb to "punish the lawless zamindars of the province, especially those of Assam and Magh (Arracan)' who had caused injury and molestation to the Muslims." Mir Jumlah occupied Koch Bihār, but failed to capture the Raja, who escaped to Bhutān. He left a garrison of five

thousand men in Koch Bihār and then, on the 4th January, 1662, set forth on his invasion of Assam. Rashid Khan joined him at Rangamāti, but the local zamindars, thinking it impossible that he could defeat the Ahoms, held aloof. Owing to the dense jungle and the numerous rivers, the journey was most tedious, and the daily marches rarely exceeded four or five miles.

Capture of Jogighopa. At last, after many delays, he arrived opposite the Ahom fort at Jogighopa with a force of twelve thousand horse and thirty thousand foot.* The garrison, which was suffering from some form of violent epidemic disease, possibly cholera, and had a total strength of only twelve thousand, was overawed by this formidable army and, after a very faint-hearted resistance, evacuated the fort and beat a hasty retreat to Srighāt and Pāndu. The author of the *Fathiyah-i-'Ibriyah* gives the following description of the fort at Jogighopa:—"It is a large and high fort on the Brahmaputra. Near it the enemy had dug many holes for the horses to fall into, and pointed pieces of bamboo (*pānjis*) had been stuck in the holes. Behind the holes, for about half a shot's distance, on even ground, they had made a ditch, and behind this ditch, near the fort, another one three yards deep. The latter was also full of pointed bamboos. This is how the Ahoms fortify all their positions. They make their forts of mud. The Brahmaputra is south of the fort, and on the east is the Monās."

Further advance. Mir Jumlah now divided his army into two divisions, one of which marched up the south bank of the Brahmaputra, while he himself, with the main body, crossed the Monās by a bridge of boats and advanced along the north bank. The fleet kept pace with the army. It comprised a number of *ghrābs*, or large vessels carrying about fourteen guns and about fifty or sixty men, each of which was in tow of four *kosahs*, or lighter boats propelled by oars. Most of the

* These figures are taken from the *Buranjis*. The Muhammadan chronicles contain no information as to the original strength of Mir Jumlah's army. It is stated, however, that he had with him at Garhgāon "12,000 horse and numerous foot," and there is, therefore, good ground for believing that the estimate in the *Buranjis* is not excessive.

ghrābs were in charge of European officers, amongst whom Portuguese predominated.* The total number of vessels of all kinds was between three and four hundred.

On receiving news of the loss of Jogighopa, Jayadhvaj Singh hastily despatched large reinforcements to Srighāt and Pāndu, but the Muhammadans arrived before them.

Occupation of Gauhāti.

The Ahom forces again declined an engagement. The troops on the north bank fled to Kājali so rapidly as to escape a turning movement attempted by a detachment under Rashid Khān. Those south of the river were not so fortunate; they were overtaken by a flying force, and large numbers of them were killed. The fort at Srighāt, which was protected by a palisade of large logs of wood, was demolished, and Gauhāti, which, at this time, was wholly or chiefly on the north bank of the river, was occupied on the 4th February 1662. A fort at Beltola succumbed to a night attack, and the garrison was put to the sword.

Ahoms concentrate at Sāmdhara.

When news of this fresh misfortune reached Kājali, the panic-stricken Ahoms left it and fled to Sāmdhara, at the mouth of the Bharali river. Strenuous efforts were here made to arrest the further progress of the Muhammadans. The army was divided into two parts, one of which, under the command of Bhebā and the Bar Gohāin, with the Tipām Raja, the Barpātra Gohāin and other officers, was posted on the north bank, while the other part, under the Bhitaruāl Gohāin, assisted by the Bar Phukan, the Sadiya Khowā Gohāin and others, was stationed on the south bank. The fortifications of Sāmdhara, and of Simlagarh on the opposite side of the river, were strengthened and surrounded by trenches, in front of which holes were dug and planted with *pānjis*. In the meantime, after halting three days at Gauhāti, where the Darrang Raja came in and made his

* An interesting account of the experiences of a Dutchman who accompanied the expedition is given in *The Loss of the Ter Schelling*, which has been reproduced in a work styled *Tales of Shipwrecks and Adventures at Sea.* (London, 2nd Edn., 1852, p. 705.) A short history of the invasion will also be found in an old work entitled *Particular Events, or the most Considerable Passages after the War of five years or thereabout, in the Empire of the Great Mogul,* Tom II, by Mons. F. Bernier, London, 1671.

submission,* Mir Jumlah started on his march for Garhgāon, the Ahom capital. Half way to Sāmdhara the whole army crossed to the south bank in boats, the passage occupying two days. The Dimarua Raja sent in his nephew to attend on the Nawāb and explained his own absence on the ground of sickness. One night there was a very violent storm on the river and a number of the ships accompanying the expedition were upset. There was also a panic among the horses, many of which jumped into the river.

Fort at Simlagarh carried by storm.

The advance along the south bank continued, and on the 28th February, the army encamped so near the Ahom fort of Simlagarh that a cannon ball fired from it passed over the Nawab's tent. This fort occupied a very strong strategic position. It lay between the Brahmaputra on the north and a range of hills on the south, and was protected on the other two sides by walls with battlements on which numerous cannnon were mounted. Outside the walls were the newly-excavated trenches and pits studded with *pānjis*. To avoid the loss of life which would have been involved in storming it, a siege was decided on. Mounds were thrown up within gunshot and cannon were mounted on them, but the walls of the fort were so thick that the cannon balls made but little impression. Gradually, however, and under heavy fire, trenches, or covered ways, were carried close up to the walls. A night attack on these trenches was repulsed, though with difficulty, and a night or two later (on the 25th February) the final assault was delivered. The resistance made by the defenders was comparatively feeble and, as soon as they found that the wall had been scaled and the gate broken open, they fled precipitately without attempting to save their guns and other war material, all of which fell into the hands of the victors. On entering the place next day, Mir Jumlah

* The submission of the Raja of Darrang is recorded only in the Muhammadan chronicles. His name is there given as Makardvaj, but the name of the Darrang Raja of this period was Surya Nārāyan. A Raja of Rāni who lived about this time was named Makardhaj, and it is possible that it is this chief who is referred to. On the other hand, when the next Ahom king came to the throne, it is stated that the Raja of Darrang sent him a message of congratulation and so restored the friendly relations which had been interrupted during the Muhammadan invasion.

was surprised at the strength of the fortifications and, in view of the bravery of the Ahom soldiers at this period, it is difficult to explain why a more stubborn defence was not made. Possibly it was because on this, as on many other occasions, they had the misfortune to be under inefficient or timid leaders.

Naval victory above Koliābar.

On the fall of Simlagarh the garrison of Sāmdhara lost heart and, having destroyed their store of gunpowder, fled without waiting to be attacked. Mir Jumlah placed a garrison in Sāmdhara and appointed a Muhammadan official as Faujdar of Koliābar. Here, as elsewhere, marauding was strictly forbidden, and the villagers brought in supplies freely. Mir Jumlah rested his army for three days at Koliābar and then continued his march. At this point the country along the bank of the river is very hilly, and he had to lead his troops along a more level route, which lay some distance inland. The fleet thus became isolated, and the Ahoms, seeing their opportunity, attacked it with their own fleet of seven or eight hundred ships, just after it had been anchored at the end of the first day's journey above Koliābar. The cannonade, which lasted the whole night, was heard by the army, and a force was at once despatched to the assistance of the fleet. This force reached the bank of the river at daybreak, and the Ahoms, on hearing the sound of its trumpets, took fright and fled. They were pursued by the Muhammadans, who captured over three hundred of their ships.* The march was then continued to Salāgarh, which the Ahoms evacuated on the approach of the Muhammadans. At this place, several Ahom officials appeared with letters from Jayadhvaj Singh asking for peace. His overtures were rejected, as it was thought that they were not sincere, and that his object was to cause delay, or a decrease in the vigilance of the invaders.

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*This naval defeat of the Ahoms is described by the Muhammadan historians and by the Dutch author of *The Loss of the Ter Schelling*. It is not mentioned in the *Buranjis*, which are usually perfectly frank in admitting reverses. In some of them, it is stated that Jayadhvaj Singh ordered an attack to be made on the Muhammadan fleet but that the Deodhāis examined the legs of fowls and found the omens unfavourable; they are silent as to what followed, but the defeat may be inferred from the subsequent statement that the king was informed of the defeat of his land *and naval* forces.

The Ahom force under the Bar Gohāin on the north bank of the Brahmaputra, after evacuating Sāmdhara, retreated eastwards, laying waste the country and forcing the inhabitants to leave their villages, so as to deprive the Muhammadans of supplies in the event of their attempting to follow him. Mir Jumlah, however, kept his army on the south bank of the river, and did not greatly trouble himself about the Bar Gohāin's troops, beyond sending occasional detachments across the river to harass his march and attack his camps. In one or two of these minor engagements the Ahom writers claim that the Bar Gohāin was victorious, but, if so, his success was not sufficiently great to encourage him to run the risk of allowing himself to be cut off from further retreat up the valley; and, as the Muhammadan army advanced up the south bank, he continued his retreat along the north.

Ahoms retreat to Lakhau.

When Jayadhvaj Singh learnt of the misfortunes that had befallen his armies, he sent orders to the commanders on both banks to concentrate at Lakhau or Lakhugarh.

This they did, but when Mir Jumlah arrived there, on the 9th March, they retreated further up the Brahmaputra after a resistance so feeble that it is not even mentioned in the Musalman accounts of the expendition.

Lakhau lies at what was then the confluence of the Dihing and the Brahmaputra. At the period in question, the latter river flowed down the course of what is now called the Lohit river, along the north of the Mājuli island, while the Dihing followed the present channel of the Brahmaputra to the south of it, and, after receiving the waters of the Disang and the Dikhu, united with the Brahmaputra at its western extremity. At a still earlier period the Dihing is believed to have flowed into the Brahmaputra further east than the Buri Dihing does now. At that time, according to native traditions, the Dikhu had an independent course as far as Kājalimukh, part of which still survives in the Mājuli as the Tuni river, and part in Nowgong, as the Kallang.

Changes in course of Brahmaputra.

Jayadhvaj Singh now resolved on flight, and orders were issued for the collection of a thousand boats in which to remove his property. The Burhā Gohāin and some others were ordered to remain at Garhgāon, while the king with the

Flight of Ahom king.

Bar Barua and Bar Phukan fled, first to Charaideo, and then to Tārāisāt. Here he held a council, at which there was a consensus of opinion that it was impossible to resist the Muhammadan host. He sent envoys with presents to sue for peace, but his overtures were again rejected and he was told that Mir Jumlah would soon be in Garhgāon, where alone he would treat with the Raja. The Ahom king then continued his flight to Tipām and thence to Nāmrup, the easternmost province of his kingdom. He was accompanied by a number of his nobles and about five thousand men. The Bar Gohāin fled to Tira, and many of the other officials took shelter on the Mājuli.

Garhgāon occupied.

The Dihing was so shallow above its junction with the Brahmaputra that it was impossible for the fleet to go further. Mir Jumlah, therefore, left it at Lakhau. After halting there for three days, during which time he was joined by a number of deserters from the Ahom cause, he set out with his land forces along the direct road to Garhgāon. Debargaon was reached in two days. The third day he halted, and, on the fourth, he marched to Gajpur. Here he heard of the flight of the Raja and at once despatched a flying column with all speed to Garhgāon to seize the elephants and other property which had not already been removed. Next day the main body encamped at the mouth of the Dikhu, and the day following, the 17th March, the Nawab entered Garhgāon and occupied the Raja's palace. Eighty-two elephants and nearly three lakhs of rupees' worth of gold and silver were found at Garhgāon, and also about 170 storehouses, each containing from one to ten thousand maunds of rice.

During the whole expedition the Muhammadans had taken six hundred and seventy-five cannon, including one which threw balls weighing more than two hundred pounds, about 9,000 matchlocks and other guns, a large quantity of gunpowder, saltpetre, iron shields, sulphur and lead, and mare than a thousand ships, many of which accommodated from sixty to eighty sailors. It is said that Mir Jumlah opened a mint at Garhgāon and caused money to be struck there in the name of the Delhi Emperor. The Muhammadans occupied a number of villages, whose inhabitants soon

began to accept the position and to settle down quietly under their new rulers.

It was the Nawab's intention to spend the rainy season at Lakhau, but three days' continuous downpour indicated an early commencement of the monsoon, and, as the captured elephants were not yet fully trained and could not be got to work properly, and without them it was impossible to transport in time the booty taken at Garhgāon, it was resolved instead to camp at Mathurapur, a village on high ground, seven miles south-east of Garhgāon. A garrison was left at the latter place under Mir Murtazā, who had orders to despatch the captured cannon and other booty to Dacca. Many outposts were established: north of Garhgāon at Rāmdāng and Trimohini, where the Dikhu falls into the Dihing; westwards at Gajpur and Dewalgaon on the way to Lakhau; southwards at Daspāni and Silpāni at the foot of the Tiru hills; and eastwards at Abhaypur, sixteen miles from Garhgāon on the Nāmrup side. A body of sturdy men from Oudh held the bank of the Dihing. From Lakhau westwards posts were established along the Brahmaputra all the way to Gauhāti.

Muhammadans suffer great hardships during the rains.

By this time the rains had set in; locomotion became difficult, and the real troubles of the invaders began. The Ahoms, although no longer willing to hazard a general engagement, had not been crushed and were by no means inclined to submit to a permanent occupation of their country; and they took advantage of the inclemency of the season to cut off communications and supplies, to seize and kill all stragglers from the main body, and to harass the Muhammadan garrisons by repeated surprises, especially at night. A successful night attack was made upon Gajpur, and the troops there were all killed. Sarandāz Khān, who was sent to retake the place, could not reach it without ships. Muhammad Murād was accordingly sent with reinforcements and ships, but Sarandāz Khān quarrelled with him and turned back. He therefore pushed forward alone, but perished with most of his men in a night attack; his whole fleet was captured and the sailors were almost all killed. At Deopāni the Ahoms threw up trenches round the Muhammadan fort and were continually on the alert to take it by

assault, but in this case, a disaster was averted by the timely arrival of reinforcements.

As it was found that the inhabitants of the villages near the outposts often joined in these operations, the Muhammadans found it necessary to adopt very strong measures as a deterrent. They gave out that they would put to death all the males in villages in which any wounded men were found after an engagement, and, after this exemplary punishment had been inflicted in one or two cases, the people in their immediate neighbourhood gave no further trouble.

At the end of May, Mir Jumlah sent Farhad Khan with a picked force to fetch supplies from the fleet at Lakhau. But he lacked boats; and after wading through mud and ditches to a point between Trimohani and Gajpur, his further progress was rendered impossible by floods. He tried to return, but found that the Ahoms had blocked the road. For a week he was besieged. A relieving force failed to reach him, but when his position seemed utterly hopeless he managed to seize some Ahom boats and defeat his enemies in a surprise attack, after which he reached Trimohani without further molestation.

With the progress of the rains, Mir Jumlah found it more and more difficult to maintain his outposts, and they were withdrawn to Garhgāon and Mathurapur. These places alone remained in his hands. All the rest of the country was re-occupied by the Ahoms, and Jayadhvaj Singh returned from Nāmrup to Solagari, only four stages distant from Garhgāon. Even Garhgāon and Mathurapur were so closely invested that, if a man ventured to leave the camp, he was certain to be shot.

About this time, negotiations for peace were opened, but accounts differ as to who began them. They fell through, the *Buranjis* say, because the terms offered were not accepted, while the Muhammadan writers assert that the Ahom Commander-in-Chief had agreed to them subject to the approval of the king, but changed his mind on the Muhammadan main body retreating from Mathurapur to Garhgāon. This he interpreted as a sign of weakness, but, in reality, it was occasioned by a bad outbreak of epidemic

disease at Mathurapur, and the consequent necessity of moving the troops to fresh quarters.*

Ahoms make constant attacks on Garhgāon.

The Ahoms renewed their attacks upon Garhgāon, and in one of their assaults succeeded in burning down a number of houses. On another occasion they entered a bamboo fort which the Muhammadans had constructed, and occupied half of Garhgāon; they were repulsed, but with great difficulty. The Muhammadans were now reduced to severe straits. They were exposed to constant attacks both by day and by night. The only food generally obtainable was coarse rice and limes. Salt was sold at thirty rupees per seer, butter at fourteen rupees a seer, and opium at sixteen rupees a tola. Fever and dysentery became terribly prevalent, and a detachment which numbered fifteen hundred men at the beginning of the war was reduced to five hundred. Many horses and draught cattle also died. To add to his troubles, Mir Jumlah heard that Prān Nārāyan had returned and driven out the garrison he had left in Koch Bihār. The troops, commanders and common soldiers alike, had become utterly dispirited, and they thought only of returning to their own homes.

They improve their position at close of rains.

Towards the end of September, however, the rains ceased and communications became easier. Ibn Husain, who had been left in charge of the Mughal fleet at Lakhau, withdrew the garrison from Dewalgāon when he heard that Mir Jumlah was isolated at Garhgāon. But he maintained the outposts at Koliābar and other places on the Brahmaputra further west, and kept up constant communication with Gauhāti. He also took the offensive against the Ahom forces on the Mājuli and prevented them from molesting the fleet. On the advent of better weather he at once reoccupied Dewalgaon and got messengers through to Mir Jumlah. The latter, after three unsuccessful attempts, bridged the Dikhu near Garhgāon, and sent out a force, which succeeded

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* In the *Fathiyah-i-'Ibriyah* it is said that Mir Jumlah demanded—

(1) the cession of all the country up to Garhgāon.
(2) the payment of 500 elephants and 300,000 tolas of gold and silver.
(3) a daughter of the king for the Imperial harem.
(4) an annual tribute of fifty elephants.

in re-establishing communication with the fleet. Large quantities of fresh supplies of all kinds were sent from Lakhau and reached Garhgāon about the end of October. The Mughals quickly recovered their morale. The land having dried up, their cavalry were once more able to operate, and Jayadhvaj Singh and his nobles again fled to Nāmrup. On the 10th November a flotilla made its way down the Dilli river and took the Baduli Phukan's trenches in the rear, routing the Ahoms after a stiff engagement. Mir Jumlah next took the Baduli Phukan's entrenchments north-east of Garhgāon, and advanced by way of Salaguri to Tipām. The Baduli Phukan now deserted to the Muhammadans, and his example was followed by many others. He submitted to Mir Jumlah a plan for hunting down the Ahom king. He was given three or four thousand fighting men for the purpose, and was appointed Subadar of the country between Garhgāon and Nāmrup. But again difficulties arose. Owing to famine in Bengal, further supplies were not forthcoming. Mir Jumlah fell seriously ill, and could travel only by palanquin; and his troops were so discontented that large numbers threatened to desert rather than enter the pestilential climate of Nāmrup or risk having to pass another rainy season in Garhgāon.

Conclusion of peace.

Mir Jumlah was thus compelled to listen to the Raja's repeated overtures, and peace was agreed to on the following terms:—

(1) Jayadhvaj Singh to send a daughter to the Imperial harem.*

(2) Twenty thousand tolas of gold, six times this quantity of silver and forty elephants to be made over at once.

(3) Three hundred thousand tolas of silver and ninety elephants to be supplied within twelve months.

(4) Six sons of the chief nobles to be made over as hostages pending compliance with the last mentioned condition.

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* Presumably this was the girl whose marriage to Prince Muhammad A'zam in 1668 with a dowry of Rs. 1,80,000, is mentioned in the *Maāsir-i-Alamgiri* (Edn. Bibl. Ind., page 73).

(5) Twenty elephants to be supplied annually.
(6) The country west of the Bharali river on the north bank of Brahmaputra, and of the Kallang on the south, to be ceded to the Emperor of Delhi.
(7) All prisoners and the family of the Baduli Phukan to be given up.

A treaty was concluded accordingly, and, on the 9th January, 1663, to the intense joy of his army, Mir Jumlah gave the order to return to Bengal.

Mir Jumlah returns to Bengal.

The main body of the army marched down the south bank of the Brahmaputra as far as Singiri Parbat, where it crossed to the north bank. Mir Jumlah himself travelled by *pālki* from Garhgāon to Lakhau, by boat from Lakhau to Koliābar, and from thence by *pālki* to Kājalimukh, a distance of eighty-four miles. His army does not appear to have been harassed in any way by the enemy,* but its plight must have been very wretched. The scribe of the expedition says that during the four days' march between Koliābar and Kājali, the soldiers lived on water, and their animals on grass. Mir Jumlah rested a few days at Kājali, and while here (on the 7th February, 1663) the army was frightened by a terrible storm of thunder and lightning, followed by a severe earthquake, the shocks of which continued for half an hour. From Kājali a move was made to Gauhāti, where Rashid Khān was installed, against his will, as Faujdār.

and dies before reaching Dacca.

The Nawāb, who had had a relapse at Kājali, now became dangerously ill, and was constrained to give up his projected expedition to Koch Bihār and to proceed direct to Dacca. He grew rapidly worse, and died, just before his ship reached Dacca, on the 30th March, 1663.

As soon as the Muhammadans had departed, Jayadhvaj Singh returned to Bakatā. He dismissed the Bar Gohāin

* Robinson, who is followed by Gunābhirām, says that some authorities state that Mir Jumlah was driven back to Bengal, but I have seen no original record which in any way bears this out. Bernier, however, makes the same statement in his *Particular Events, or the most Considerable Passages after the War of five years or thereabout in the Empire of the Great Mogul.*

with ignominy, beating him, it is said, with the flat side of his sword, and dealt similarly with all the other officials who had been found wanting in their conduct of the war. As a precaution, in the event of any subsequent invasion, he caused a stronghold to be constructed in Nāmrup and collected a quantity of treasure there.

Jayadhvaj Singh dies. Character and miscellaneous events of reign.

He did not long survive the anxieties and hardships of the invasion, and, in November 1663, he was attacked by a serious disease, of which he died after an illness of only nine days. This king was very much under the influence of the Brāhmans, and, it is said, actually enrolled himself as the disciple of Niranjan Bāpu, whom he established as the first Gosāin of the great Auniāti *Sattra*.* Hearing of the fame of Banamāli Gosāin of Koch Bihār, he sent for him, and gave him land for a *Sattra* at Jakhalābāndhā. At the instigation of the Brāhmans, he persecuted the Mahāpurushia sects and killed some of their leading members. His private life was far from reputable; and much scandal was caused by an intrigue with his chief queen's sister. He eventually, on the suggestion of his father-in-law, made her his wife, and subsequently caused her previous husband to be assassinated. He allowed himself to be ruled in everything by these two sisters, and whatever they did was law. He appointed their paternal uncle to be Phukan of Kājalimukh.

The public works constructed during this king's reign included the road from Āli Kekuri to Nāmdāng, the Seoni Āli, the Bhomraguri Āli, and the tank at Bhatiāpārā.

Condition of Assam in 1662, according to a Muhammadan observer.

Mir Jumlah was accompanied on his invasion of Assam by a writer named Shihabuddin who wrote a detailed account of the expedition and gave a very full description of the people and the country. This contemporaneous account by a foreign observer, albeit a somewhat critical one, is of special interest, as it mentions many matters on which the indigenous records are silent. It is accordingly reproduced below.†

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* According to another account, his Guru was Pathel Gosāin of Kuruābāhi.

† I have utilized the translation made by Prof. Jadunath Sarkar, *Journal of the Bihar and Orissa Research Society*, Vol. I, page 179. Throughout this account "Assamese" means "Ahoms."

"Assam is a wild and dreadful country, abounding in danger. It lies north-east of the province of Bengal. The river Brahmaputra flows through it from the east towards the west. The length of Assam from west to east, Gauhāti to Sadiya, is about 200 *kos;* its breadth, north to south, from the hills of the Gāros,* Miris, Mishmis, Daflas, and Lāndahs* to those of the Nāga tribe is seven or eight days journey at a guess. Its southern mountains touch lengthwise the hilly region of Khāsia, Kachhar and Gonasher* and breadthwise the hills inhabited by the Nāga tribe......The land on the north bank of the Brahmaputra is called Uttarkol, and on the southern bank Dakhinkol. Uttarkol stretches from Gauhāti to the home of the Miri and Mishmi tribes, and Dakhinkol from the kingdom of the Nāk-kāti Rāni to the village of Sadiya....From Koliābar to Garhgāon houses and orchards full of fruit trees stretch in an unbroken line; and on both sides of the road, shady bamboo groves raise their heads to the sky. Many varieties of sweet-scented wild and garden flowers bloom here, and from the rear of the bamboo groves up to the foot of the hills there are cultivated fields and gardens. From Lakhugarh to Garhgāon, also, there are roads, houses and farms in the same style; and a lofty and wide embanked road has been constructed up to Garhgāon for traffic. General features.

"In this country they make the surface of fields and gardens so level that the eye cannot find the least elevation in it up to the extreme horizon. Uttarkol has greater abundance of population and cultivation; but as there are more inaccessible strongholds and defensible central places in Dakhinkol, the kings of Assam have fixed their abode in the latter.

"The climate of the parts on the banks of the Brahmaputra suits natives and strangers alike. But at a distance from the river, though the climate agrees with the natives, it is rank poison to foreigners. It rains for eight months in the year, and even the four months of winter are Climate and diseases.

* Gāro must be a clerical error. Lāndah may be a mistake for Ānkā or Akā. Gonaser is the name given by Rennell to the south part of the Gāro Hills.

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not free from rain. In the cold weather the diseases of cold and moisture affect foreigners with greater severity than natives, while in summer excessive secretion of bile grasps foreigners more violently than natives. The people of this country are free from certain fatal and loathsome diseases—such as leprosy, white leprosy, elephantiasis, cutaneous eruptions, goitre and hydrocele,—which prevail in Bengal. They are also immune from many other lingering maladies. The air and water of its hills are like the destructive Simoom and deadly poison to natives and strangers alike. Its plains, by reason of their being girt about by hills, tend to breed melancholy and fear.

Vegetation and crops.

"The trees of its hills and plains are exceedingly tall, thick and strong. Its streams are deep and wide, and both those that contain pools and those that do not, are beyond the range of numbering. Many kinds of odorous fruits and herbs of Bengal and Hindustan grow in Assam. We saw here certain varieties of flowers and fruits, both wild and cultivated, which are not to be met with elsewhere in the whole of India. The cocoanut and *nim* trees are rare; but pepper, spikenard and many species of lemon are abundant. Mangoes are full of worms, but plentiful, sweet and free from fibre, though yielding scanty juice. Its pineapples are very large, delicious to the taste, and rich in juice. Sugar-cane is of the black, red and white varieties and very sweet; but so hard as to break one's teeth; ginger is juicy....The chief crop of the country is rice, but the thin and long varieties of the grain are rare. Wheat, barley and lentils are not grown. The soil is fertile; whatever they sow or plant grows well. Salt is very dear and difficult to procure. It is found in the skirts of certain hills, but is very bitter and pungent. Some of the people of this country cut the bananas to pieces, dry them in the sun and burn them. Then they put the ashes on a piece of fine linen which they tie to four rods fixed in the ground, place a pot underneath and gradually sprinkle water on the cloth; and they use the drippings which are extremely brackish and bitter as a substitute for salt.

Animals.

"Cocks, waterfowl, geese, goats, castrated goats and game-cocks are large, plentiful and delicious. Most of the

game-cocks of this country have been found to be so far above the disgrace of taking to flight, that if a weak one encounters a stronger it fights obstinately till its head is broken and its brain strewn about, and it dies, but it never turns its face away from its antagonist nor shows its back to its enemy. Large high-spirited and well-proportioned elephants abound in the hills and jungle. The deer, elk, *nilgau,* fighting ram and partridge are plentiful.

Metals, currency, etc

"Gold is washed from the sand of the Brahmaputra. Ten to twelve thousand Assamese are engaged in this employment, and they pay to the Raja's government one *tola* of gold per head per year. But this gold is of a low-standard of purity; a *tola* of it fetches only eight or nine rupees. It is said that gold can be procured from the sand at all places on the bank of the Brahmaputra; but the only people who know how to gather it are those Assamese. The currency of this kingdom consists of cowries and rupees and gold coins stamped with the stamp of the Raja. Copper coins are not current. The musk deer and the elephant are found in the hills inhabited by the Miri and Mishmi tribes, which lie in the east of Assam on the Uttarkol side at a distance of eleven days' journey from Garhgāon. Silver, copper and tin are also obtained in the hills of the same tribes.......The aloe wood which grows in the hills of Nāmrup, Sadiya and Lakhugarh, is heavy, coloured and scented.

Revenue.

"If this country were administered like the Imperial dominions, it is very likely that forty to forty-five lakhs of rupees would be collected from the revenue paid by the raiyats, the price of elephants caught in the jungles and other sources. It is not the custom here to take any land tax from the cultivators; but in every house one man out of three has to render service to the Raja, and if there is any delay in doing what he orders, no other punishment than death is inflicted. Hence the most complete obedience is rendered by the people to the biddings of their Raja.

Former invasions of Assam.

"In all the past ages no foreign king could lay the hand of conquest on the skirt of this country, and no foreigner could treat it with the foot of invasion. Narrow are the gates by which outsiders can enter or issue from this country, and

lame are the feet on which its natives can go to other countries. Their kings neither allow foreigners to enter their land, nor permit any of their own subjects to go out of it. Formerly once a year, by order of the Raja, a party used to go for trade to their frontier near Gauhāti; they gave gold, musk, aloe wood, pepper, spikenard and silk cloth in exchange for salt, saltpetre, sulphur and certain other products of India which the people of Gauhāti used to take thither. In short every army that entered this country made its exits from the realm of life; every caravan that set foot on this land deposited its baggage of residence in the halting place of death. In former times whenever an army turned towards this country for raid and conquest, as soon as it reached the frontier, the wretches made night attacks on it. If success did not dawn on the night of their enterprise, they used to drive away to the hills the peasantry along the route of invasion, leaving not a man to inhabit a house or kindle a fire in that tract. The invaders neglecting caution and watchfulness, reached the centre of the country after passing unobstructed roads full of danger, raging torrents and frightful valleys covered with deadly forests. And by reason of the distance, the winter expired on the way and the rainy season began. The wretches, descending from the hill tops like a flood, invested the army on all sides. As the saying is, "to mud tear drops are abundance of water," if two drops of rain fall on this moist land, movement becomes impossible. So that imprudent army on being besieged, has no power left to confront and repel the enemy, and grows weaker through failure to procure supplies of food, and is soon exterminated or taken prisoner.

"Once Husain Shah, a Sultan of Bengal, entered Assam with 20,000 foot and horse and numberless boats, and the Raja leaving his kingdom, fled to the hills. Husain Shah then returned to Bengal, leaving his son with most of his troops to occupy the country. When the rainy season arrived and the roads became closed, the Raja came down from the hills to the low country and surrounded Husain Shah's son with the help of his subjects who had professed submission to the latter. And that unfortunate prince and troops, soon becoming weak through lack of food, were

slain or captured. It is said that certain inhabitants of this country who bear the name of Muhammadans are descended from the captured soldiers of that army. And as no one who entered this country ever returned, and the manners of its natives were never made known to any outsiders, the people of Hindustan used to call the inhabitants of Assam sorcerers and magicians and consider them as standing outside the human species. They say that whoever enters this country is overcome by charms and never comes out of it.

"The Rajas of this country have always been self confident and proud by reason of the large number of their followers and attendants and the abundance of their property, treasure and armed force; and they have always maintained vast bodies of fighting men and mountain-like ferocious-looking elephants. The present king Jayadhvaj Singh, is surnamed Swargi Raja. The false belief of this fool is that one of his ancestors who ruled over heaven descended from thence by means of a golden ladder and undertook to administer this country; and as he found the land pleasant, he did not go back to heaven. In short, this insane fellow is more sunk in conceit and pride and more addicted to shedding blood and destroying lives than his ancestors. For a slight fault he would extirpate a whole family; on the least suspicion, he would kill a whole generation. As his wives bring forth daughters only and his successor in the kingdom will be no other than Infamy, he has not left any male child from among the grand children of his grand parents. Although he is attached to the Hindu religion, yet he considers himself to be one of the great incarnations of the Creator; he does not bow his head down in worship to any idol. The Rajas of Assam.

"And all the people of this country, not placing their necks in the yoke of any faith, eat whatever they get from the hand of any man, regardless of his caste, and undertake every kind of labour that appears proper to their defective sight. They do not abstain from eating food cooked by Muslims and non-Muslims, and partake of every kind of meat, whether of dead or of slaughtered animals, except human flesh. It is not their custom to eat *ghi*, so that if The people.

any article even savours of *ghi* they will not eat it. Their language differs entirely from that of all the peoples of Eastern India. Strength and heroism are apparent in the peoples of this country; they are able to undertake hard tasks; all of them are warlike and bloodthirsty, fearless in slaying and being slain, unrivalled in cruelty, treachery and rudeness, unique in the world in deception, lying and breach of faith. The persons of their women are marked by beauty and delicacy of features, blackness and length of hair, softness of body, fairness of complexion and loveliness of hands and feet. From a distance their general appearance looks perfectly beautiful, but disfigured by the absence of proportion in the limbs. When, however, they are looked at close at hand, they are found to be far from beautiful. The wives of the Rajas and peasants alike never veil their faces before anybody, and they move about in the market-places with bare heads. Few of the men have two wives only; most have four or five, and they mutually exchange their wives, or buy and sell them. Adoration among this people takes the form of kneeling down. The peasants who go to the Raja, or the nobles who have audience of him, after bending both the knees, sit down in the kneeling posture, keeping both eyes fixed on the ground. They shave their hair, beard and moustaches. If any of the natives acts contrary to this practice in the least particular, they say that he has adopted the manners of the Bengalis and they cut his head off.

"Asses, camels and horses are rare and difficult to procure in this country. As affinity of species is the cause of fellowship, those timid asses, viz., the Assamese, express a great desire to see and keep donkeys, and by reason of their own asinine nature, buy them at high prices; and they are eager beyond limit to look at that marvel of creation, the camel! They are greatly frightened by horses, and if they catch one, they hamstring it. If a single trooper charges a hundred well-armed Assamese, they all throw their arms down and run away, and if they cannot flee, they put their hands up to be chained as prisoners. But if one of them encounters ten Musalman infantrymen, he fearlessly tries to slay them and succeeds in defeating them. The Assamese

consider the sale of an elephant as the most disgraceful of acts, and never commit it.

"The Raja and Phukans ride on *sinhāsans,* and the chiefs and rich men in *dulis,* which are constructed with poles and planks in a ludicrous fashion. The poles of *sinhāsans* and *dulis* are carved out of wood. They make chairs of wood in the style of stools, and strap them to the backs of elephants instead of covered litters and howdahs. It is not their custom to tie turbans round the head, to wear coats, trousers or shoes, or to sleep on bedsteads. They only wrap a piece of fine linen round the head, and a waistband around the middle, and place a *chaddar* on the shoulders. Some of their rich men in winter put on a half-coat like a jacket. Those who can afford it sleep on a plank which serves for a bedstead. They chew large quantities of betel leaves with unripe areca nuts of which the rind has not been removed. Flowered silk, velvet, *tat-band* and other kinds of silk stuff are excellently woven here. They make very nice and neat trays, chests, thrones and chairs, all carved out of one piece of wood. Among the property of the Raja, some thrones were found, each made of one piece of wood, and nearly two cubits broad and having legs cut out of the same piece and not joined to it. **Dress and furniture**

"They build war boats like the *kosahs** of Bengal, and call them *bacharis.* There is no other difference between the two than this that the prow and stern of the *kosah* have two projecting horns, while those of the *bachari* consist of only one levelled plank; and as, aiming solely at strength, they build these boats with the heart-wood of timber, they are slower than *kosahs.* So numerous are the boats, large and small, in this country that on one occasion the news-writer of Gauhāti reported in the month of Ramzan that up to the date of his writing 32,000 *bachari* and *kosah* boats had reached that place or passed it. The number of boats that conveyed the Imperial army and those inhabitants of Assam who accompanied the Nawab (Mir Jumlah) on his return probably exceeded the number mentioned by the news-writer. Probably half of these were owned by Assamese. They **Boats and war ships.**

* Rowing boats for towing *ghurabs,* or floating batteries.

build most of their boats of *chambal* wood; and such vessels, however heavily they may be loaded, on being swamped do not sink in the water.

Guns and houses.

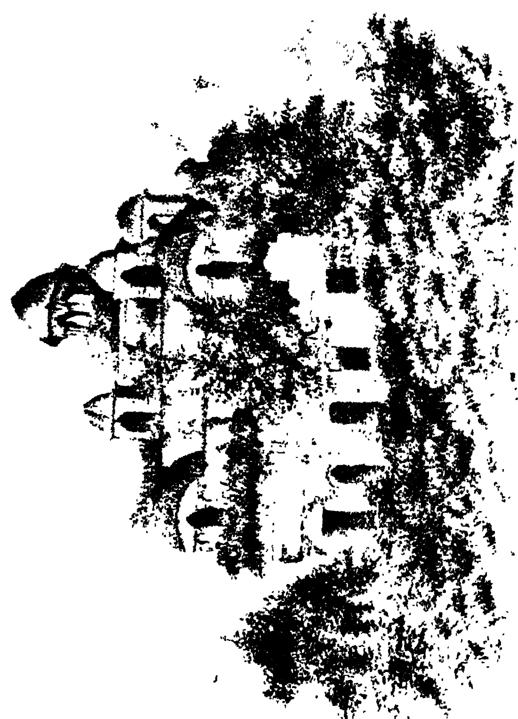
" They cast excellent matchlocks and *bachadar* artillery, and show great skill in this craft. They make first-rate gunpowder, of which they procure the materials from the Imperial dominions. In the whole of Assam there is no building of brick, stone or mud, with the exception of the gates of Garhgāon and a few temples. Rich and poor alike construct their houses with wood, bamboo and straw. The original inhabitants of the country are of two races—the Assamese and the Kolita. In all things the latter are superior to the former; but in performing difficult tasks and making a firm stand in battle, the opposite is the case.

The army.

" Six or seven thousand Assamese always stand guard round the abode and bedroom of the Raja, and these are called *Chaudangs*. They are the devoted and trusted servants of the Raja and are his executioners. The weapons of war are matchlocks, cannon, arrows with and without iron heads, short swords, spears and long and crossbows. In time of war all the inhabitants of the kingdom have to go to battle, whether they wish it or not; like jackals they set up a concerted howl, all at the same time, and deliver a great assault. These jackal-hearted people imagine that by means of such shouts they would frighten the lions of the forest of battle and tigers of the plain of fight. A very small number of their soldiers often checkmate thousands in battle. But those of their warriors and heroes who attack the enemy with sword and arrow and boldly pierce the enemy's ranks, belong to the race of genuine Assamese, and these probably do not number more than 20,000 men.* They mostly engage in battle and night attacks on a Tuesday which they consider an auspicious day. The common people either fight and are defeated, or flee without fighting, fixing in their mind's eye the purport of the verse: " Those who had fear gained safety, while the fearless were destroyed," they throw away all their arms and escape.

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* At the census of 1921 the total number of persons returned as Ahoms was 210,380.



"The common people bury their dead with some of the property of the deceased, placing the head towards the east and the feet towards the west. The chiefs build vaults for their dead, and place therein the wives and servants of the deceased, after killing them, together with necessary articles for a few years, including various kinds of gold and silver vessels, carpets, cloths and foodstuffs. They cover the head of the dead very strongly with stout poles, and bury in the vault a lamp with plenty of oil and one living lamp attendant to remain engaged in the work of trimming the lamp. From the ten vaults which were opened (by the Mughals) property worth nearly ninety thousand rupees was recovered.* One of the marvels was that from the vault of one of the queens of this country who had been buried eighty years ago, a gold betel casket was taken, within which the betel leaf was still green. The author did not see this casket. **Burial customs.**

"As for the Musalmans who had been taken prisoner in former times and had chosen to marry here, their descendants act exactly in the manner of the Assamese, and have nothing of Islām except the name; their hearts are inclined far more towards mingling with the Assamese than towards association with Muslims. The Muhammadans who had come here from Islamic lands engaged in the performance of prayer and fasting, but were forbidden to chant the call to prayer or publicly recite the "word of God." **The local Muhammadans.**

"The city of Garhgāon has four gates of stone set in mud, from each of which to the Raja's palace, for a distance of three *kos*, an extremely strong, high and wide embankment (*āl*) has been constructed for the passage of men. Around the city, in the place of a wall, there is an encompassing bamboo plantation running continuously, two *kos* or more in width. But in the city the habitations are not regularly laid out. The houses of the inhabitants have been built in a scattered fashion within the bamboo grove, close to the *āl*, and every man's orchard and plough-land are situated in front **The Capital.**

* The statement of this writer is confirmed by Colonel Dalton who reported that several mounds, known to be the graves of Ahom kings, were opened and were found to contain the remains of slaves and animals, and also gold and silver vessels, raiment, arms, etc.

of his house, one end of the field touching the *āl* and th other the house. Near the Raja's palace, on both banks o the Dikhu river, the houses are numerous and there is narrow bazar-road. The only traders who sit in the baza are betel-leaf sellers. It is not their practice to buy and se articles of food in the market-place. The inhabitants stor in their houses one year's supply of food of all kinds, an are under no necessity to buy or sell any eatable.

"In short the city of Garhgāon appeared to us to b circular, wide and an aggregation of villages. Round th Raja's house an embankment has been made and strong bamboos have been planted on it close together to serve as a wall Round it a moat has been dug which is deeper than a man' height in most places, and is always full of water. The enclosure is one *kos* and fourteen chains in circumference Inside it high and spacious thatched houses have been bui

The palace. "The Raja's audience hall, called *solang*, is 120 cubts long and 30 cubits broad, measured on the inside. It stans on 66 pillars, each of them about four cubits round. Th have smoothed these huge pillars so well, that at first sig they seemed to have been turned on a lathe. Though t people pretended to have the art of turning on lathes, y reason refuses to believe it. My pen fails to describe i detail the other arts and rare inventions employed i decorating the woodwork of this palace. Probably nowhe else in the whole world can wooden houses be built with suc decoration and figure-carving as by the people of th country. The sides of this palace have been partitioned in wooden lattices of various designs carved in relief, and adorned, both within and outside, with mirrors of brass, polished so finely that when the sunbeams fall on then, the eye is dazzled by the flashing back of light. This mansion was completed by 12,000 men working for one year. At one end of this palace, on four pillars facing each other, rings have been fixed, nine rings on each pillar. Whenever the Raja wished to live in this house, a throne was placed between the four pillars, and nine canopies, each of a different stuff, were fastened to the rings above the throne. The Raja sat on the throne under the canopies; the drummers beat their drums and *dands*. The *dand* is a circular flat

instrument of brass like our gongs. When the Raja holds court or rides out, or the nobles set out for the places to which they have been newly appointed, the drums and *dands* are beaten. As for the many other wooden mansions—carved, decorated, strong, broad and long, which were inside the palace enclosure, their elegance and peculiar features can better be seen than described. But may not even an infidel be fated to behold these houses unless this country is annexed to the Imperial dominions, so that he might not be involved in the calamities that overwhelmed us.

"Outside the enclosure of the palace, a perfectly neat and pure mansion has been built for the residence of the Raja; and the nobles have built very nice and strong houses near the royal palace. The Bar Phukan, who was the Raja's son-in-law, had laid out an extremely elegant and fresh garden round a very pure and sweet tank within the grounds of his mansion. Truly it was a pleasant spot and a heart-ravishing and pure abode. Owing to the excess of damp, it is not the custom in this country to make the courtyard of houses on the surface of the ground; but they build their houses on platforms resting on wooden pillars."

Chakradhva Singh, 1663 to 1669.

Jayadhvaj Singh left no sons; so the nobles called in the Sāring Raja and placed him on the throne. The *Buranjis* are not agreed as to the relationship which existed between him and his predecessor. According to some, he was a brother, while others say that he was a cousin, and others again, that he was the grandson of some previous king. In some of the *Buranjis* it is said that Jayadhvaj Singh had two sons, neither of whom was considered fit to rule, but the weight of evidence is on the other side. The contemporary Muhammadan writer whose account has been quoted above says quite definitely that the Raja had no sons.

The new monarch was christened Supungmung by the Deodhāis. He assumed the Hindu name Chakradhvaj Singh. At the ceremony of installation the Brāhmans and Ganaks were entertained at a feast and were given many valuable presents. The Jaintia Raja sent an envoy to convey his congratulations. So also did the Koch Raja of Darrang, who had sided with Mir Jumlah during his invasion, and with whom friendly relations were thus restored.

About the same time two Muhammadan officials arrived with presents (originally intended for Jayadhvaj Singh) and a reminder that the balance of the indemnity was overdue. The king received them coolly; he complained that their master had not kept faith with him in the matter of the boundary, and that the prisoners taken during the late war had not been released. It is said that, on receiving this reply, Aurangzeb promised to give up any portion of the newly-acquired country that had not previously been included in the dominions of the Koch kings, but, in spite of this, Chakradhvaj still withheld payment of the outstanding portion of the indemnity. Rashid Khān, the Faujdar of Gauhāti, again sent a messenger to ask for it, but, as he would not agree to make the customary obeisance on entering the royal presence, the king refused to receive him. The messenger afterwards gave way and obtained an audience, but he failed to get any portion of the money and elephants that were still due, the excuse being that there was no money in the treasury and that the elephants could not be sent until they were properly trained.

Soon afterwards it transpired that the Neog Phukan and some others were engaged in a treasonable correspondence with the Muhammadans, and they were arrested and put to death.

Nāga and Miri expeditions.

In 1665 the Bānpara Nāgas were attacked by the Bānchāng Nāgas and, being worsted, invoked the assistance of the Ahoms. Their petition was granted and an expedition was sent. The Bānchāngias made a stubborn resistance, but in the end they were driven off. They returned as soon as the Ahom troops were withdrawn, and a fresh expedition was despatched. On this occasion they successfully resisted all attempts to take the fort which they had erected until cannon were brought up, when they fled. Their houses and granaries were destroyed and they then submitted.

About the same time the Miris raided. They destroyed a small expedition that was sent against them. A larger force was then despatched, and although the Miris, aided by the Daflas and Deori Chutiyas, had collected a force of 7,500 men, they appear to have been overawed by the strength of the Ahom army and dispersed without giving battle. Their

villages were sacked and the persons found in them were taken captive.

Famine of 1665.

The year 1665 was remarkable for an exceptionally severe drought, which not only prevented cultivation, but made it necessary in many parts to dig deep wells in order to obtain water for drinking. This is the only occasion recorded in the whole course of Assam history when the rains failed to an extent sufficient to cause a complete failure of the crops.

Renewal of hostilities with the Muhammadans.

Early in 1667 Saiad Firuz Khān, who had succeeded Rashid Khān as Thānadār of Gauhāti, sent a strongly worded letter to the Ahom king, demanding the payment of the balance of the indemnity still outstanding. It is not quite clear how much remained unpaid. In only one *Buranji* is the subject at all fully dealt with, and that one is very obscure. It appears that elephants were sometimes sent in lieu of money, and that their value was calculated at Rs. 2,000 each: at this rate it would seem that a sum of Rs. 1,12,000 was still due.

Chakradhvaj Singh had already been busily engaged in repairing the forts at Sāmdhara and Patākallang, and in restoring his army to a state of efficiency; and, on receiving Firuz Khān's letter, he made up his mind to fight. His nobles tried to dissuade him, and pointed to the disastrous results of the last war and the still impoverished condition of the people. But the king refused to listen to them, and his determination to fight was strengthened on his learning from the Deodhāis that the omens presaged a successful issue. The necessary preparations were made with all speed; and, in August 1667, after sacrifices had been offered to Indra, a well-equipped army set out, to wrest Gauhāti from the Muhammadans. The command was entrusted to Lāchit, the son of the Bar Barua, who was appointed Bar Phukan. The Muhammadan outposts at Kājali on the south bank of the Brahmaputra, and Bānsbāri on the north, were taken at the first assault: numerous prisoners and many horses, cannon and other booty fell into the hands of the victors, and were sent to the king at Garhgāon. The Ahoms constructed forts at Kājali and Latāsil, and continued their advance towards Gauhāti. They won several engagements,

but suffered a minor reverse on the bank of the Barnadi, where a small stockade, which they had erected, was taken by the Muhammadans and its garrison put to the sword. This, however, did not affect the general course of the campaign.

Conquest of Gauhāti.

Gauhāti and Pāndu were invested, and were captured after a siege of two months, in the course of which the Muhammadans made several spirited but unsuccessful sallies. Many prisoners and cannon and a great quantity of booty were taken. The prisoners were massacred. The actual cash was divided amongst the soldiers, but everything else was forwarded to the king.

Early in November a number of warships arrived with reinforcements for the Muhammadans, who renewed the conflict, but still without success. They were driven from Agiathuthi, and suffered a series of defeats as they gradually fell back on the Monās river. Here they made a stand, but fortune was again adverse. They were completely surrounded; a great number were slain, and most of the remainder were made prisoners. The captured officers were sent to Garhgāon, but the common soldiers were ruthlessly slaughtered.

An inscription in Assamese on the Kanai Barasi rock, near the Mani Karnesvar temple in Kāmrup, records the erection of an Ahom fort there in Sak 1589 (1667 A.D.) "after the defeat and death of Sana and Saiad Firuz." An old cannon at Silghāt bears the following inscription in Sanskrit:—"King Chakradhvaj Singh, having again destroyed the Muhammadans in battle in 1589 Sak, obtained this weapon, which proclaims his glory as the slayer of his enemies." Another old cannon at Dikom bears a similar inscription, which refers to a victory in the following year. This cannon is peculiarly interesting, as it also has an inscription in Persian, reciting that it was placed in charge of Saiad Ahmad al Husain for the purpose of conquering Assam in 1074 Hijri (1663 A.D.).*

* A collection of inscriptions on Cannon will be found in Appendix I to my *Report on the Progress of Historical Research in Assam.*

When the news of these successes reached the king, he was overjoyed, and showered presents on his successful generals. Gauhāti was chosen as the headquarters of the Bar Phukan. Pāndu and Srighāt were strongly fortified, and prompt arrangements were made for the administration of the conquered territory. A survey of the country was carried out and a census was taken of the population.

Fresh Muhammadan war.

In 1668 there were hostilities with the Muhammadans at Rangamāti, where a Raja named Indra Daman was apparently in command; his troops were defeated at Kākphāk, on the south bank of the Brahmaputra but, on his coming up in person with reinforcements, the Ahoms fell back on Srighāt. His attack on this place failed, and he retreated to Jakhalia. But a fresh enemy was soon to appear on the scene. The news of the defeat of Firuz Khān, and of the loss of Gauhāti, reached Aurangzeb in December 1667. He at once resolved to wipe out the disgrace, and, with this object, appointed Raja Rām Singh to the command of an Imperial army, which was to be strengthened by troops of the Bengal command. He was accompanied by Rashid Khān, the late thānādār of Gauhāti. Some time was taken up in collecting and transporting his army, which consisted of 18,000 cavalry and 30,000 infantry, with 15,000 archers from Koch Bihār; and he did not reach Rangamāti until February 1669.* The Ahoms had not quite completed their preparations for resisting his advance, so resorted once more to their old device of opening insincere negotiations in order to gain time. They sent to enquire of Rām Singh why he was invading the country. He replied by referring to the old treaty under which the Bar Nadi and the Asurār Āli had been taken as the boundary, and demanding the evacuation of the country to the west of this line. By the time he received this reply, the Bar Phukan had completed his dispositions. He replied that he would rather fight than yield an inch of the territory which Providence had given to his master. In spite of this somewhat bombastic announcement, he seems to have retreated some distance

* These figures are taken from the *Buranjis*. The strength of the expedition is not stated in the *Alamgirnāmah*, where the subject is dealt with very briefly. (Bibl. Ind., edition, page 1068).

before he ventured to resist the invaders, and the first two battles of the campaign were fought near Tezpur in the beginning of April. The Ahoms were worsted on both occasions, but they gained a naval battle, and soon afterwards repulsed the Muhammadans in an attack on their fort at Rangmahal. Rām Singh was compelled to retire to Hājo, where he quarrelled with Rashid Khān. The latter, having previously been in independent command at Gauhāti, could not brook a subordinate position, and claimed equal rank with Rām Singh. To make matters worse he was suspected of secret correspondence with the enemy. Eventually Rām Singh cut his tent ropes and ordered him out of the camp. Soon afterwards the Muhammadans were again defeated near Suālkuchi, both on land and water.

At this juncture, it is said that Rām Singh challenged Chakradhvaj Singh to single combat, and undertook, if he were defeated, to return with his army to Bengal. The Ahom king declined the invitation, and ordered his generals to renew their attack. They did so, and won another double engagement near Sessa. They followed up this success by taking the fort at Agiathuti, the garrison of which they massacred, but soon afterwards Rām Singh attacked the Ahom army and routed it, inflicting heavy loss. The Bar Phukan hurried up with reinforcements, but his flank was turned and he was obliged to retreat with the loss of all his ships. For this he was severely censured by the king. Raja Rām Singh now opened negotiations for peace. The Ahoms also were tired of the war, and hostilities were suspended for a time.

Death of Chakradhvaj Singh.

Soon afterwards Chakradhvaj died. His reign was so fully occupied by constant wars that there was very little time for the execution of public works, and the only new road constructed was that from Teliadanga to Jhanzimukh.

Udayāditya, 1669 to 1673.

His brother Māju Gohāin, thenceforth known as Sunyātphā, succeeded him. He assumed the Hindu name Udayāditya Singh, and married his deceased brother's wife.

The war with the Muhammadans is renewed.

The negotiations with the Muhammadans continued. Raja Rām Singh proposed that the old boundary should be maintained, and the Bar Phukan expressed his concurrence, but, while he was waiting for the Ahom king's confirmation,

Rām Singh, who had received reinforcements and apparently suspected his sincerity, advanced with his army to Sitamāri and sent a detachment into Darrang. Udayāditya thereupon prepared to renew the war, and ordered the Burhā Gohāin to march with 20,000 men from Sāmdhara to Srighāt. The Muhammadans advanced to meet them, and a dual engagement ensued. The Ahoms were successful on land, but their navy was forced to retreat to Barhilā, and the army was thus also obliged to fall back. The arrival of the Bar Phukan with more ships enabled the Ahoms to return to the attack. This time the Muhammadan navy was beaten, and a second land victory was gained by the Ahoms.

Ultimate success of Ahoms who annex Kāmrup.

A series of encounters followed, but the *Buranjis* are confused, and it is impossible to follow the operations in detail. The Gāros and the Raja of Rāni came to the assistance of the Ahoms and, in March 1671, Rām Singh had become so weakened by repeated losses that he retreated, first to the Harān river, and afterwards to Rangamāti.*

The news of his departure was conveyed to Udayāditya, who received it with great joy, and loaded the Bar Phukan with presents. Hādirā, opposite Goālpāra, now became the Ahom frontier outpost. Chandra Nārāyan,† son of Mahendra and grandson of Bali Nārāyan, was installed as tributary Raja of Darrang, on the north of the Brahmaputra, and Gandharba Nārāyan, as Raja of Beltola. The Bar Barua and the Bar Gohāin were entrusted with the arrangements for the defence of Upper Assam. But the Muhammadans showed no desire to renew the contest, and for some years there was peace between the two nations.

Dafla expedition.

The opportunity was taken to send an expedition of one thousand men under the Bar Barua against the Daflas, who had refused to pay tribute, and had raided a village, killing three men, and carrying away forty women and children. The Bar Barua entered their country, and called upon them to surrender their captives, but they declined to do so.

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* According to the *Alamgirnāmah,* Rām Singh was in Assam from 1667 till 1685, but this doubtless includes the period for which Rangamāti was his head-quarters.

† This is the name given in the Ahom *Buranjis,* but possibly the correct name is Surya Nārāyan.

He advanced to the Sikling river, whence he detached a force to attack the hillmen, but they hid themselves in the dense jungle and the detachment returned without finding them. The Bar Barua then began to retrace his steps, but, on the receipt of a peremptory order from the Raja to persevere, he constructed a fort on the bank of the Bharali and ascended again to Sikling, whence he advanced by successive stages to the Pāti, Tilari, and Petarhing rivers. His advance guard took a village on a hill, but the Daflas then surrounded and destroyed it. The Bar Barua, on hearing of this disaster, again beat a retreat. The king thereupon ordered him to be stripped naked and put to death, but on the intercession of the queen-mother, the sentence was commuted to one of dismissal and banishment.

Insurrection. Murder of the king.

After the cessation of hostilities with the Muhammadans vigorous enquiries were set on foot with a view to the arrest and deportation to Nāmrup of all the chiefs and other prominent men who had been disloyal to the Ahom cause. In the course of these enquiries, it was reported that amongst those who had taken the part of the Muhammadans was a priest named Chakrapāni, a descendant of the Vaishnava reformer Sankar Deb, but it was impossible to punish him as he had escaped across the frontier. The accounts which he heard of this man's learning and piety aroused the king's interest; he induced him to pay him a visit under promise of pardon and, after hearing him discourse, was so impressed, that he gave him a grant of land at Sāmaguri and made him his spiritual preceptor. He ordered his officers and people to follow his example, and many did so, but some of the nobles were greatly offended and persuaded his younger brother to join them in a conspiracy against him. This became known to the king, who at once ordered the gates of the city to be closed and his brother to be arrested. The latter, being thus driven to extremities, collected his adherents and appeared with them at one of the gates in the middle of the night. The guards refused to let him in, but he broke down the gate and, entering the city, seized the person of the king. He put to death the Bar Barua and other officials who had refused to countenance the conspiracy. The people then hailed him as king. Next day Udayāditya was taken

to Charãideo and poisoned. His three wives were put to death, while the unfortunate priest, who had unwittingly caused the revolution, was impaled and set adrift on a raft on the Dikhu river. These events took place in August 1673.

This reign was remarkable chiefly for the eviction of the Musalmans from Kāmrup, and the construction of strong fortifications at Gauhati. By this time the Ahoms were able to make their own cannon, and there is one at Gauhāti, near the house of the Deputy Commissioner, which bears an inscription to the effect that it was made under the orders of the Solã Dharã Barua in the reign of this king, in the year 1594, Sak, which corresponds to 1672 A.D.

In 1671 a treasure house at Hilikhã, containing a great store of gold and silver, was burnt down. Enquiry showed that the Bharãli Barua was responsible for the fire, which was caused by his carelessly leaving a lighted pipe near some inflammable material, and he was compelled, as a punishment, to smoke elephants' dung.

The plot which resulted in Udayãditya's death was not the only one in his reign; another was planned soon after his accession; it was detected in time, and the conspirators were caught, but most of them were afterwards pardoned.

CHAPTER VII.

THE CLIMACTERIC OF AHOM RULE.

Rāmdhvaj, 1673 to 1675.

THE fratricide now ascended the throne. He assumed the Ahom name Suklāmphā and the Hindu name Rāmdhvaj. He rewarded with the post of Bar Barua the ring leader of the conspiracy which brought him to the throne, whose name was Deberā *alias* Lāchāi. Almost immediately the Bar Gohāin set on foot a plot in favour of the Sāring Raja, but it was discovered, and he and the Sāring Raja were both put to death.

Expeditions against Deori Chutiyas and Mishmis.

A force was sent against the Deori Chutiyas, who had become insubordinate, and they were quickly reduced to order; many of their males were deported, and a yearly tribute of boats was exacted. There was also trouble with the Mishmis, who had made a raid in Ahom territory. They surrounded a small detachment of 100 men which was sent against them, but submitted on the arrival of a stronger force under the Bar Phukan, and gave up the men responsible for the raid.

The king is murdered.

The king now became seriously ill and sent for his brothers, the Rajas of Tipām and Nāmrup. In anticipation of his early decease, the question of the succession was hotly discussed by the nobles. Some were in favour of one or other of the king's brothers; others pressed the claims of Lādām, his son by the chief queen, and others again urged that the son of Udayāditya should be the next king. The Bar Barua, Debera, foresaw that his position would be one of great danger if the last-mentioned succeeded to the throne, and determined to do all in his power to prevent him from doing so. With this object he collected a band of armed men. The king heard of this and, thinking perhaps that there was a conspiracy on foot against himself, ordered him to be arrested. The Bar Barua, however, was on the alert and put to death the men sent to effect his arrest. He also killed or mutilated some other officers whom he looked on as his enemies, and finally, in March 1675, caused the king to be poisoned.

The nobles in council decided to raise Udayāditya's son to the throne, but they reckoned without the Bar Barua, who, calling in his band of armed men, seized and put to death his chief opponents, and installed as king a prince named Suhung from Sāmaguri. Suhung took as his chief queen one of the widows of Jayadhvaj Singh, who was a sister of the Bar Phukan. Suhung, 1675.

The Tipām Raja, who was one of the rival claimants to the throne, raised an army and marched towards the capital. He was met and defeated by the Bar Barua, and was caught and executed. The Bar Barua also, on his own motion, put to death a number of his private enemies, whom he enticed from Gauhāti on the pretence that the king had sent for them. Suhung, finding that he was nothing more than a puppet in the hands of this crafty and overbearing minister, sought means to kill him, but the Bar Barua was informed of his danger by a servant, and so caused the king to be assassinated after a reign of only 21 days.

The Bar Barua next brought from Tungkhang a prince named Gobar, grandson of the Deo Raja, and made him king. Soon afterwards he sent a message to the Bar Gohāin, who was then at Gauhāti, asking him to send in the Bar Phukan. The messengers were intercepted by the latter who, suspecting that his life was in danger, induced the Bar Gohāin and Sangrai Burhā Gohāin to join with him in putting an end to the reign of terror, which, he said, would prevail so long as the Bar Barua lived. They swore a solemn oath of fidelity to each other, raised an army, and marched against the Bar Barua. The Bar Barua advanced to meet them, but, when his enemies approached, his troops deserted him, and he was fain to seek safety in flight. He was pursued and captured, and taken before the Bar Phukan, who caused him to be executed. Gobar was also taken, and put to death. He had been king for barely a month. Gobar, 1675. Sujinphā, 1675 to 1677.

It was by no means easy to find a suitable candidate for the throne. After a prolonged discussion it was decided to nominate a prince of the Dihingia clan named Sujinphā, a son of the Nāmrup Raja and a descendant of Suhungmung, the Dihingia Raja. He ascended the throne

with great éclat. Large sums of money were distributed amongst the people and the festivities continued for seven days. Before installing him, the nobles had themselves appointed a new Bar Barua in the place of the deceased Debera.

There had been so many conspiracies during the last few years that the new king resolved to protect himself by exacting an oath of fealty from all his officers. Cannon were posted at the gates of the city and the streets were lined with soldiers; the various officers of State were then summoned to attend and take the prescribed oath. Many of them, however, were so incensed by the order, and by the want of confidence in them that it implied, that, instead of going to the capital, they entered into a conspiracy with the Burhā Gohāin. This noble secretly collected some men and, in the dead of night, entered the city and surrounded the palace. At this moment the king woke up and saw them in the courtyard. He at once grasped the position and, rushing out, sword in hand, attacked them with such vigour that they fled leaving several of their number dead upon the ground. When morning came, many of the conspirators were caught. They were pardoned on their swearing to be faithful in the future. They were required to take a two-fold oath, one in the presence of Brāhmans before a Sālgrām of Lakshmi Nārāyan, a copy of the *Bhāgavat* and a *tulsi* plant, and the other according to the old Ahom method, by the shedding of blood before the great drum The Burhā Gohāin was not amongst those that were caught; he escaped in a boat and went down the Dikhu river to Lakhau, where he was joined by a number of disaffected people from Gauhāti. The king sent the Bar Gohāin and the Barpātra Gohāin to induce him to come in, under a solemn promise of pardon, but he was not convinced of the sincerity of these assurances and refused to submit. He tried to win over to his side the officers who had been sent to fetch him, and persuaded the Bar Gohāin to desert the king's cause; he was unable to seduce the Bar Pātra Gohāin from his allegiance, although he was his son-in-law, and so sent him under a guard to Koliābar. He himself advanced to Sinātali, where he met and defeated a force which the king had sent

against him. The king thereupon fled to Garhgāon. He was seized, and his eyes were put out; and he was afterwards stoned to death.* His body was buried at Charāideo. This was in July 1677. Of the king's four sons the eldest, Dighala, managed to escape; the second was blinded and sent to Nāmrup, and the two youngest were put to death.

Sudaiphā, 1677 to 1679.

The nobles urged the Burhā Gohāin to assume the kingly office, but he was not of the royal blood, and the Bāilong pandits, on being consulted, declared themselves strongly opposed to the suggestion. He therefore obtained the assent of the nobles to the nomination of Khāmcheo of the Parbatiya clan, a grandson of a former king, who was brought from Charāideo. and installed under the Ahom name Sudaiphā. It does not appear that he took any Hindu name. On ascending the throne, he performed the *Rikkhvān* ceremony and offered sacrifices to Siva as well as to the Ahom gods. Warned by the fate of his predecessor, he determined to propitiate the Burhā Gohāin; he married his daughter, bestowed upon him a landed estate and numerous other presents, and gave him a high-sounding title. The ascendancy now enjoyed by the Burhā Gohāin aroused the jealousy of the other high officials. At his instance the Bar Barua, who had become obnoxious to him, was dismissed and, fearing for his personal safety, fled to Srighāt. The Belmela Phukan was the next to be disgraced. In revenge, he determined to assassinate the king. He crept into the palace at night, but in the darkness, by mistake, he killed the king's mother instead of the king; he then fled to Tāmulihāt.

The Burhā Gohāin soon fell foul of the Bar Phukan, who had not shown himself sufficiently subservient, and sought for an opportunity to oust him from his appointment. The latter was informed of his impending ruin and, knowing that it would be useless to appeal to the king, entered into treasonable correspondence with the Nawāb of Bengal, who arranged to send Prince Muhammad Azam in the following February to take possession of Gauhāti, which the Bar

* According to another account he committed suicide after he had been deprived of his eyesight.

Phukan agreed to deliver into his hands. The plot was divulged to Sudaiphā, who at once took steps to frustrate it. He hastily raised an army and divided it into two parts, one of which he stationed at Chintamani, while the other was sent down-stream to resist the advance of the Muhammadans. But it was too late to save Gauhāti, which was surrendered to the Muhammadans by the Bar Phukan early in March 1679. This is the Ahom version. In the *Maāsir-i-Ālamgiri* the "conquest" of Gauhāti is mentioned, but no details are given.*

The dissatisfaction with the administration of Sudaiphā, or rather of the Burhā Gohāin, continued to spread; and soon afterwards three high officials openly allied themselves to the Bar Phukan, who raised an army and advanced towards the capital. He met with little or no resistance and, as he advanced, most of the local officials joined his force. Those who refused to do so were killed. By November 1679 he had made himself master of the whole kingdom. He seized the person of the king, and caused him to be put to death. This he did with the consent of a prince named Sulikphā, whom he proceeded to raise to the throne, without even pretending to consult the other great nobles.

In this reign the town of Boka was built. The construction of a Sil Sāko or stone bridge is also mentioned, but this was not the well-known structure near Kamalpur in Kāmrup, which is believed to have been erected at a much earlier date.

Larā Raja 1679 to 1681.

Sulikphā, from his tender age, was generally known as Larā Raja, or "the boy king." Prompted by the Bar Phukan, his first act was to cause the execution of Sangrai, the Burhā Gohāin, who had compassed the death of Gobar and Sujinphā, and whose overbearing conduct had led to the rebellion which culminated in the late king's death. The Bar Phukan now occupied the position recently held by the Burhā Gohāin and, before him, by Debera Bar Barua. But, undeterred by their fate, he resolved not merely, as they had done, to exercise the power, but also to assume the rank of king. It is said that he communicated his design to the

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* Ed. Bibl. Ind., page 73.

Emperor of Delhi, who sent a reply conveying his approval, but whether this be true or not, there is no doubt that he openly asserted his equality with the king and clothed himself in garments which the latter alone was allowed to wear. But his triumph was short-lived. His overweening arrogance set the other nobles against him, and he was assassinated. His three sons and two of his brothers shared his fate. The Bhātdharā Phukan, a third brother, who was at Koliābar, saved his life by a timely flight to Muhammadan territory, where he tried to induce the local officials to give him troops to avenge his brother's death. He seems to have received some encouragement from Prince Muhammad Azam, but the latter had not a sufficiently strong force at his disposal to invade the Ahom country with any great prospect of success; and, in the end, he decided not to interfere. In order to prevent further conspiracies, by removing all possible rivals, Larā Raja determined to maim or kill all the descendants of former kings, and it is said that several hundred scions of the royal family were deprived of life or mutilated. He failed, however, to find one of his most formidable rivals; and Gadāpāni, the son of Gobar, though he was sought for everywhere, succeeded in eluding his pursuers.

Larā Raja soon proved himself to be a most unsatisfactory king. He aroused the resentment of his nobles, not only by his incapacity and utter want of aptitude for public business, but also by his tyrannical conduct. In July 1681, the Bar Phukan openly espoused the cause of Gadāpāni who, up to this time, had been living in concealment near Rāni in Kāmrup, in the house of a Gāro woman, wearing the garb of a common peasant, and working in the fields like an ordinary cultivator. The king prepared to resist, but he had no real supporters; and, as the rebels advanced towards the capital, his army melted away. The Dakhinpāt Gosāin, who was the Guru both of the king and of the Bar Phukan, in vain exhorted the latter to return to his allegiance. The king, deserted by all, sought safety in flight, but was caught and banished to Nāmrup. He was afterwards put to death for intriguing to recover the throne.

In this reign the Dauki Ali was made.

Summary of intrigues since 1670.

Since the death of Chakradhvaj Singh in 1670, *i.e.*, in the short space of eleven years, there had been no less than seven kings, not one of whom had died a natural death. Udayāditya was deposed and poisoned by his brother, Rāmdhvaj, who succeeded him. Debera, who had headed the conspiracy, was rewarded for his infamous services with the post of Bar Barua; but he was a born intriguer, and not long afterwards, Rāmdhvaj himself met his death at his hands. He then set up Suhung, but subsequently caused him also to be assassinated. Having thus been responsible for the death of three kings, Debera at last met the end he deserved at the hands of the Burhā Gohāin, who, however, was equally false and unscrupulous. He put to death Suhung's successor Gobar, and placed Sujinphā on the throne. He afterwards caused the latter to be deprived of his sight and put to death, and appointed Sadaiphā as his successor. This king and the Burhā Gohāin himself next suffered the death penalty at the hands of Lāluk Bar Phukan, and Sulikphā became king. The Bar Phukan, growing more ambitious, was preparing to seize the throne for himself, when the other nobles caused him to be assassinated. Sulikphā was soon afterwards deposed and put to death on the ground of his unfitness to rule, a circumstance which had probably constituted his chief qualification in the eyes of the ambitious Lāluk. With his death, and the accession of Gadāpāni, the era of weak and incompetent princes, and of unscrupulous and ambitious ministers came to an end; internal corruption and dissensions ceased, and the Ahoms were once more able to present a united front against their external foes.

Gadādhar Singh, 1681 to 1696.

On ascending the throne, Gadāpāni assumed the Ahom name Supātphā, and the Hindu name Gadādhar Singh. He made his capital at Barkola.

Gauhāti retaken from Muhammadans.

His first act was to equip an army to oust the Muhammadans from Gauhāti. He appears to have met with very little opposition. The forts at Bānsbāri and Kājali fell at the first assault, and a great naval victory was gained near the mouth of the Bar Nadi, the whole of the enemy's fleet falling into the hands of the Ahoms. This misfortune seems to have paralyzed the Faujdar of Gauhāti; and he fled

without offering any further resistance to the advancing Ahoms, who pursued him as far as the Monās. A vast amount of booty was taken at Gauhāti, including gold and silver; elephants, horses and buffaloes; cannon of all sizes; and guns, swords and spears. These spoils were offered to the king and were distributed by him among the officers who had led the troops to victory. The Bhātdharā Phukan, who had attempted to incite the Muhammadans to invade Assam, was captured with his son, and an awful punishment was inflicted upon him. His son was killed and he was compelled to eat his flesh, after which he also was put to death. A Muhammadan spy, who was caught, was taken round the camp and shown all the dispositions of the Ahom commanders, and was then killed.

This was the last Muhammadan war. Henceforward the Monās was accepted by both sides as the boundary. This final loss of Gauhāti is not mentioned by Muhammadan historians. The *Buranjis* give the name of the defeated Musalmān General as Mansar Khān, a doubtful name. Possibly the word *Mansabdār,* which means 'commander,' was taken by the Ahoms as the general's name; or the word may be a corruption of Masum Khān, which was the name of a Muhammadan Bhuiyā of Sunārgaon who took part in the invasion of 1636.

Three cannon are still in existence, one at Dikom, one in the Indian Museum, and the third outside the house of the Deputy Commissioner of Lakhimpur, which bear the following inscription:—"King Gadādhar Singh, having vanquished the Musalmāns at Gauhāti, obtained this weapon in 1604 Sak (1682 A.D.)."

Internal conspiracies.

There were several conspiracies during the early part of Gadādhar's reign. The Bar Phukan and Pāni Phukan, who were accused of plotting against the king, were arrested and tried by the three Gohāins, who reported them guilty, in spite of their protestations of innocence. Their lives were spared in consideration of their past services, but they were dismissed from their appointments: a number of minor officials accused of complicity were put to death. Soon afterwards a second conspiracy was detected, and on this occasion the ringleaders suffered the death penalty. A searching enquiry was now

made into the origin of these conspiracies, and all suspects were severely dealt with; the Burhā Gohāin, the Bar Barua and the newly appointed Pāni Phukan were dismissed, and many others were executed, or banished to Nāmrup. The man who was now made Burhā Gohāin soon got into trouble. A servant of his predecessor complained that he had misappropriated a number of stray cattle. The charge was investigated and found to be proved, and he and his sons were put to death.

Miri and Nāga expeditions.

In 1685 the Miris raided by night, and set fire to the house of the Sadiyā Khowā Gohāin. A punitive expedition was sent against them, and they were defeated, with the loss of four killed and a large number of prisoners; much booty was also taken. As a precaution against further raids embanked roads were constructed from the Brahmaputra to two forts in the Miri country, and were furnished with fortified gateways.* The Sadiyā Khowā Gohāin was dismissed from his appointment on account of the apathy shown by him during these operations.

The Nāgas made a raid on the inhabitants of the Doyang valley, and a punitive expedition was sent against them. They fled, but their houses were burnt down, and they then submitted and were pardoned, after they had given compensation for the losses inflicted on the villagers. A raid by the Nāmsāng Nāgas led to another expedition, in which many Nāgas, including the tribal chief, were captured and beheaded.

Persecution of Vaishnava sects.

The neo-Vaishnava sects, founded on the teaching of Sankar Deb, had now attained remarkable dimensions. The country was full of religious preceptors and their followers, who claimed exemption from the universal liability to fight and to assist in the construction of roads and tanks and other public works. This caused serious inconvenience, which the Sākta Brāhmans, who had the king's ear, lost no opportunity of exaggerating. Gadādhar Singh was himself a good liver; and he feared the physical deterioration that might ensue if

* The Muhammadans describe similar gateways in connection with Mir Jumlah's invasion of Koch Bihar. They stood upon a broad raised road, mostly overgrown with trees, with deep and broad ditches on either side.

his people obeyed the injunction of the Gosāins and abstained from eating the flesh of cattle, swine and fowls, and from indulging in strong drinks. He bore, moreover, a personal grudge against some of the leading Gosāins for having refused to shelter him in the days when he was in hiding, and for having endeavoured to dissuade the Bar Phukan from his design to set him up as king in the place of Larā Raja. He therefore resolved to break their power for good and all.* Under his orders many of them were sent to Nāmrup and put to death there. The Auniāti Gosāin, Keshab Deb, escaped this fate by hiding in a Chutiya village, but Rām Bāpu, the Dakhinpāt Gosāin, was captured and deprived of his eyes and his nose; his property was confiscated and his gold and silver idols were melted down.

Nor did their *bhakats*, or disciples, fare much better. Those belonging to the better castes, such as Ganaks, Kāyasths and Kalitās, were left alone, but those of low caste, such as Kewats, Koches, Doms and Hāris, were hunted down, robbed of their property, and forced to eat the flesh of swine, cows, and fowls. Many of them were deported to out-of-the-way places and made to work as coolies on the roads; others were mutilated; others were put to death, and a few were offered up as sacrifices to idols. The persecution spread far and wide, and at last no one of any persuasion was safe if he had anything worth taking. When the king found that things had reached this pass, he ordered the persecution to be stopped, and restitution to be made in all cases where people had been wrongfully despoiled.

Death of king. His character and general events of reign.

Gadādhar Singh died in February 1696, after a reign of fourteen years and-a-half. When he ascended the throne the kingly office was fast sinking into the low estate which it held amongst the later Marāthās, and the real authority was gradually being monopolized by the nobles; but in a very short time he effectually broke their power and vindicated the supreme authority of the monarch. At the time of his

* An exception was made in favour of the Jakhalābāndhā Gosāin, who had sheltered the king when he was a fugitive and had foretold that he would eventually gain the throne.

accession, the power of the Ahoms was being sapped by internal dissensions; and patriotic feeling had become so weakened that many deserted to the Muhammadans, who had re-occupied Gauhāti, and were gradually pushing their frontier eastwards. The hill tribes too, emboldened by immunity from punishment, were harrying the submontane villages and perpetrating frequent raids. Before he died, he had quelled all internal disputes, revived the waning national spirit, driven the Muhammadans beyond the Monās, and, by prompt punitive measures, put a stop to raiding and restored the prestige of the Ahoms among the turbulent tribes on the frontier.

He was a patron of Sākta Hinduism. The temple of Umānanda, on Peacock Island opposite Gauhāti, was built under his auspices, and the earliest known copper-plates, recording grants of land by Ahom kings to Brāhmans or Hindu temples, date from his reign.

It is impossible to justify, or palliate, the brutal severity of the measures which he adopted with a view to overthrow the Vaishnava sects but there can be no doubt that the power of their priesthood was already becoming excessive; and the history of the Moāmariā insurrection in later times shows that the inordinate growth of this power is not only prejudicial to progress, but may easily become a very serious menace to the safety of established institutions.

Gadādhar Singh was keenly alive to the importance of public works. During his reign the Dhodar Ali, the Aka Ali and other roads were made; two stone bridges were built, and several tanks were excavated. A noteworthy measure of this monarch was the commencement of a detailed survey of the country. He had become acquainted with the land measurement system of the Muhammadans during the time when he was in hiding in Lower Assam, before he succeeded to the throne, and, as soon as the wars which occupied the earlier years of his reign were over, he issued orders for the introduction of a similar system throughout his dominions. Surveyors were imported from Koch Bihar and Bengal for the work. It was commenced in Sibsāgar and was pushed on vigorously, but it was not completed until after his death. The method of survey adopted is nowhere described, but it

was probably the same as that which was in vogue when Assam was first occupied by the British, i.e. the area of each field was calculated by measuring the four sides with a *nal*, or bamboo pole, 12 feet long, and multiplying the mean length by the mean breadth. The unit of area was the *purā*, which contained four standard Bengali *bighās* of 14,400 square feet.

This king is reputed to have been a man of very powerful physique with a remarkably gross appetite. His favourite dish was coarse spring rice, and a calf roasted in ashes.

Rudra Singh, 1696 to 1714.

Gadādhar Singh left two sons, of whom the elder succeeded him. He ascended the throne at Garhgāon, taking the Hindu name Rudra Singh, and the Ahom name Sukhrungphā.

The body of the late king was interred at Charāideo with great ceremony. An effigy of him was made and adorned with fine clothes, and men were appointed to make to it daily offerings of pigs, fowls, fish and wine. At the same time the Ahoms were feasted on the flesh of swine and buffaloes.

Persecution of Vaishnava sects stopped.

The new king at once began to reverse his father's policy in regard to the Vaishnava Gosāins. Those of them who were Brāhmans were allowed to resume their old position and avocations, subject only to the condition that they made their headquarters on the Mājuli, which from that time forward became their chief seat. The Auniāti Gosāin was specially honoured, as the king not only recalled him from his exile, but appointed him his spiritual preceptor. The persecution of the Sudra Medhis also ceased, but Brāhmans were forbidden to bend the knee to them, and they were compelled to wear as their distinctive badge small earthen jars hanging from a string round the neck.

Palace and temples built by a Bengali architect.

Rudra Singh was anxious to build a palace and city of brick, but there was no one in his kingdom who knew how to do this. He therefore imported from Koch Bihar an artisan named Ghansyām, under whose supervision numerous brick buildings were erected at Rangpur, close to Sibsāgar, and also at Charāideo. When Ghansyām had finished his work, and was on the point of departing, richly rewarded by the king, it was accidentally discovered that he had in his possession a document containing a full account of the

country and its inhabitants. It was assumed that his object was to betray the Ahoms to the Muhammadans, and he was arrested and put to death.

War with the Kachāris.

During the long period that had elapsed since the last war with the Kachāris, the latter had gradually forgotten their frequent defeats at the hands of the Ahoms, and had become more and more reluctant to acknowledge their hegemony. At last Tāmradhvaj, who was their king when Rudra Singh ascended the throne, boldly asserted his independence. Rudra Singh at once resolved to reduce him to submission, and, with this object, caused two large armies to be fitted out. The Bar Barua was deputed to enter the Kachāri country by way of the Dhansiri valley with a force which numbered over 37,000 men, while the Pāni Phukan with another, 34,000 strong, was to march *viâ* Rahā and the valley of the Kopili.

The Bar Barua's march to Maibong.

The Bar Barua started from Salā in the latter part of December 1706, and, ascending the valley of the Dhansiri, reached the Sāmaguting fort on the Dijoa Hill, 106 miles from Salā.* In order to maintain communications and to facilitate the transmission of supplies, forts were constructed and garrisoned at regular intervals along the line of march. In spite of this precaution, the Nāgas gave great trouble and constantly plundered the convoys on their way to Sāmaguting. Troops were sent against them, and a few Nāgas were killed, but it was not until the garrisons of the forts near Sāmaguting had been very greatly strengthened that these raids were put a stop to.

The march was continued to the Namirā fort on Nomāl hill, a distance of 36 miles.† In the valley below this hill the Kachāris made their first stand. But the Ahom forces were too strong for them and they fled, after a very feeble

* The place which I have identified as Sāmaguting is called Samaguri in the *Buranjis*. The itinerary is as follows:—From Salā to Nāga Chauki, 49 miles; on to Deopani, 18 miles; to Dilas fort, 11 miles; to Kākajan, 13 miles; to Tim Muri, 7 miles; and to Sāmaguting, 8 miles. The distances are only approximate. There was, it is said, a tank of the "Dijoa Raja" on the Dijoa hill, measuring 400 yards by 300.

† To Marnai 7 miles, to Bāgmarā 11 miles, to Gerekāni 10 miles, to Namirā 8 miles.

resistance, to the Lāthia hill, a distance of 9 miles. Here they ambuscaded several small parties which had been sent forward to clear the jungle, but, when an advance was made in force, they were defeated with considerable loss, and retreated, carrying their dead with them. They now took up a position on a hill near Āmlakhi. but fled on the arrival of the Ahoms at Tarang, a place about four miles distant. The Ahom army continued its advance, *viâ* Nādereng, to the Kachāri capital at Maibong, a distance of nine miles, and was allowed to enter the town unopposed. A good deal of booty was here taken, including a cannon and 700 guns.

Having thus achieved the immediate object of his advance, the Bar Barua occupied an entrenched position at Māhur, a little to the north of the town, and sent word of his success to the Bar Phukan and to the Ahom king.

The Pāni Phukan joins him by another route.

In the meantime the Pāni Phukan proceeded down the Kallang to Rahā. As there was no road between this place and Demerā, forty-one miles distant, the army had to cut its way through dense jungle. This was a most tedious operation, and the rate of progress did not greatly exceed a mile a day.* On the way to Demerā, Salgāon, Lambur and a village of Dharmapur, belonging to a temple of the Goddess Kāmākhyā were sacked. The Kachāris had made preparations to repel the invasion, but were deterred on seeing the strength of the hostile army. As the Ahoms advanced, the inhabitants of the villages along the line of march deserted their homes and fled towards Maibong. Demerā was occupied without opposition. A garrison of 3,000 men was left there, and the army then entered the hills and continued its arduous march to Nādereng, 23 miles distant, which was reached in thirteen days. Here a letter was received from the Bar Barua saying that he had already occupied Maibong. The Pāni Phukan pressed on to join him, and covered the remaining distance of seventeen miles in two days. During his march he had taken in all 322 prisoners and a small quantity of loot.

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* Titelikhara, a distance of 7 miles, was reached in 6 days; Jamuna fort, 6 miles, in 5 days; Katāha, 7 miles, in 6 days; Deoduki, 9 miles, in 5 days; Saralpāni, 7 miles, in 5 days; and Demerā, 6 miles, in 5 days.

Sickness at Maibong.

At Maibong the troops suffered greatly from the pestilential climate, and many, including the Bar Barua, fell ill. Provisions also began to run short, and the vigour with which the campaign had been conducted up to this period was succeeded by a long spell of inaction. The king, who was now at Rahā, sent repeated orders to the commanders to press on to Khāspur, but they were either unwilling or unable to do so. At last, in obedience to very peremptory orders, the Pāni Phukan marched as far as Sāmpāni. The Bar Barua, who was now seriously ill, started to return to Demerā, but died during the journey.

Return of the expedition.

About the end of March 1707, the king was at last persuaded to abandon his project of taking Khāspur. He recalled the Pāni Phukan, who brought back the whole force, after demolishing the brick fort at Maibong, burning down the houses there, and erecting a pillar, thirteen feet high, to commemorate the success of his troops. This pillar has long since disappeared. The return journey to Demerā, along the track which had been cut during the advance, occupied only three days. Fortifications were constructed at this place, and a strong garrison was left there. But when the rainy season set in, the sickness and mortality amongst the troops because so serious that the king was obliged to order them to be withdrawn.

The Jaintias seize the Kachāri king,

While these events were in progress, the Kachāri king Tāmradhvaj had fled to Bikrampur, in the plains portion of what is now the district of Cachar, whence he sent an urgent appeal for help to Rām Singh, Raja of Jaintia. The latter collected an army, but, before he could march, Tāmradhvaj sent a second message, reporting that the Ahom forces had been withdrawn and saying that he was no longer in need of help. Rām Singh was now guilty of an act of gross treachery. The Ahoms had dispersed the Kachāri troops, and it occurred to him that, if he could obtain possession of the person of the Kachāri king, he would be able also to become master of his kingdom. He marched to Mulāgul and, under the pretext of a friendly meeting at Bālesvar, seized Tāmradhvaj and carried him off to his capital at Jaintiapur, in the plains country north of the Surma river, now known as the Jaintia parganas. Several members of

his family, who were induced to join him there, were also placed in close confinement, and the Kachāri frontier forts at Bandasil and Ichchhāmati were attacked and taken.

who appeals to the Ahoms for help.

Tāmradhvaj managed to send to the Ahom king, by the hands of a *bairāgi*, a letter saying what had happened to him, asking forgiveness for his past offences, and begging for deliverance from the hands of his captor. Rudra Singh, who seems to have been delighted, alike with the submissive tone of the Kachāri king's letter, and with the opportunity thus afforded him to display his power in a new direction, at once directed the officer in charge of the Ahom outpost at Jāgi to send word to Rām Singh, through his tributary chief of Gobhā, demanding the immediate release of his captive.

The Ahoms invade the Jaintia kingdom.

Rām Singh refused to comply, whereupon Rudra Singh closed the market at Gobhā, on which the hill Jaintias were largely dependent for their supplies, and commenced collecting troops with a view to the invasion of their country as soon as possible after the close of the rains. A start was made at the beginning of December 1707. As in the case of the Kachāri war, he decided to despatch his troops by two different routes. The Bar Barua, with 43,000 men, was to march on Jaintiapur, *viâ* the Kopili valley and the Kachāri country, while the Bar Phukan with another force, the strength of which is not stated, was to proceed by the direct route through Gobhā and the Jaintia Hills.

Advance of Bar Barua's army to Jaintiapur.

The route taken by the Bar Barua lay through a friendly country, and Sāmpāni, the furthest point attained by the Kachāri expedition of the previous year, was reached without any occurrence worthy of note.* At that place he received a deputation of prominent Kachāris, who assured him that nothing was to be feared from the neighbouring Nāga tribes. He proceeded to Bikrampur,† taking the precaution to send messengers ahead to reassure the people, who, at each camping place, came and paid their respects, and were much

* The halting places *en route* were Kardaiguri, Katahā, Sāmaguting, Demerā, Gelembu, Jātrāgarh hill, Doyang fort, Doyang ford fort, Baila hill, Māhur hill and Maibong.

† The route to Bikrampur was *viâ* Hojāi fort, Rangji, Meghpur, Sāmaguri, Kākani, Ahārura, Panisarā, Aranggāon.

relieved to find that they were not expected to supply provisions for the army. The Jaintia outposts at Bālesvar, Dalāgaon and Mulāgul were easily taken. On reaching the last-mentioned place, the Bar Barua again sent messengers to Rām Singh, calling upon him to surrender Tāmradhvaj. Seeing that resistance was hopeless, he did so, and, at the same time, requested the Bar Barua to stay his advance and to direct the Bar Phukan, who was also rapidly drawing near, to do the same. The Bar Barua replied that unless the family and officers of Tāmradhvaj were also given up, he would continue his march next day. After some hesitation, this further demand was also complied with, but the Bar Barua nevertheless continued his march to Jaintiapur.

Rām Singh prepared to resist him, and placed cannon on the walls; but, as the Ahoms approached, he lost heart and, after burying his treasures, prepared for flight. His intention was discovered by his nobles who, from the beginning, had done their utmost to dissuade him from incurring the enmity of the Ahoms and, being unwilling that he should escape scot-free and leave them to suffer the consequences of his folly, they compelled him to make his submission to the Bar Barua. He therefore proceeded with an escort of twenty elephants towards the Ahom camp. On approaching it, he was made to dismount and ride on horse-back, unattended, to the tent of the Bar Barua, who received him in state. After the interview he wanted to return to his capital, but was not allowed to do so. News of his capture was sent to the king, who directed the Bar Phukan to press on and join the Bar Barua at Jaintiapur.

Route taken by the Bar Phukan.

The progress of the Bar Phukan's army may now be briefly described. Starting from Jāgi he marched to Gobha and conciliated the chief of that place by presents.* At Hātibāndha, 19 miles from Gobhā, the Jaintias made a demonstration against some detachments that were engaged

* The full route was:—Gobhā 7 miles; Amāseongā hill 9 miles; Hātibāndha 10 miles; Narottam hill 7 miles; Athitbhanga 1 mile; Lachor hill 2 miles; Buritikar 2 miles; Barpāni 5 miles; Saralpāni 13 miles; Silsāko 2 miles; Nartung 5 miles; Lakimpur 3 miles; Chāmtang Nartung 2 miles; Natagāri 3 miles; Pavanāi 8 miles; Mukutapur 16 miles; Jaintiapur Nāogāon 2 miles.

in clearing the jungle, but retreated when they saw the strength of the Ahom army. Eight miles further on, at Athitbhagā, they attacked the Ahoms, but were defeated and retreated, carrying their killed and wounded with them. At Lachor hill another and more determined onslaught was made by a stronger force, which was accompanied by some elephants. The Ahoms, taken by surprise, wavered, but rallied and eventually drove back their opponents. The victory, however, was by no means decisive, and the Jaintias made a fresh stand at the Buritikar hill, about two miles away, where they occupied some stockades which they had previously prepared. The Ahoms, who had exhausted a great part of their ammunition, waited for a fresh supply. When this was received, they attacked the stockade, on a day chosen by the astrologers as auspicious, and drove out the Jaintias, who, however, at once occupied three new stockades five miles away, on the bank of the Barpāni river. They now tried to stop the further advance of the Ahoms by promising to give up the Kachāri king if they would return to Gobhā, but the Bar Phukan refused to negotiate and at once advanced to the attack. The stockades were taken, and from this time there was no further active opposition. On reaching Pavanāi, the Bar Phukan heard of the arrival of the Bar Barua at Jaintiapur and hastened to join him there.

Proposed annexation of Jaintia and Kachāri kingdoms.

Rudra Singh directed the two captive kings to be produced before him, Tāmradhvaj being taken *viâ* Maibong and Rām Singh across the Jaintia hills. He also ordered the Jaintia king's garments, jewels, arms, elephants and horses to be brought to him, and his treasure to be divided amongst the troops who had taken part in the campaign. The Ahom subjects who had fled to Khāspur during Mir Jumlah's invasion were to be brought back, and an army of occupation under the Bar Barua and the Bar Phukan was directed to remain at Jaintiapur. These orders were carried out in February 1708. Envoys announcing that the Kachāri and Jaintia kingdoms had been annexed to the dominions of the Ahom Raja were sent to Māti Ullah, the Muhammadan Faujdar of Sylhet, who, it is said, made a courteous reply.

Fresh risings amongst the Jaintias.

These measures caused the greatest possible irritation amongst the Jaintia nobles. They had been quite willing to permit the rescue of the Kachāri king, but they were not prepared to allow their own ruler to be carried off and their independence to be subverted without a far more strenuous resistance than they had yet attempted; and they induced the Bar Dalai, the Raja of Khairam, and the inhabitants of two hundred independent Khāsi villages to join them in a supreme effort to expel the invaders.

They would fain have attempted to rescue their Raja as he was being taken to Gobhā, but the force escorting him was too strong, and they were afraid to risk an encounter. Shortly afterwards, however, a simultaneous attack was made on the eight forts in which the Bar Phukan had left garrisons on his way through the hills. Three of these forts were taken unawares and were captured by the Jaintias, who put the defenders to death. The other garrisons succeeded in repelling the first attack, but, being without a sufficient supply of food and ammunition, were soon obliged to retreat. At the same time a small detachment, which was taking the copper image of the Goddess Jaintesvari to Rudra Singh, was attacked and put to flight and the image was rescued. The survivors of this detachment, and of the various garrisons, rallied at Nartung, and held it for a time, but they eventually beat a retreat towards Gobhā. On their way they were attacked again. The officers did their utmost to preserve order, but in vain. The soldiers, seized with panic, broke and fled, hotly pursued by the Jaintias. Most of them were put to death, but a few escaped to Saralpāni whence they, with the garrison of that fort, made their way to Sarupāni; here they remained till rescued by the troops who had taken the Jaintia Raja to Gobhā.

The Jaintias are beaten, but in the end the Ahoms retreat.

On hearing of the rising, Rudra Singh promptly sent up reinforcements, including the detachment of four thousand men under the Burhā Gohāin which had again been stationed at Demerā. The combined forces attacked the Jaintias wherever they could find them, but, as the practice of the Jaintias was to disperse when attacked, and then return and harass the Ahom troops on their way back to camp, it was found impossible to achieve any decisive victory.

They destroyed, however, a number of villages round Nartung and took many head of cattle. Meanwhile, news of the rising had reached the Bar Phukan and Bar Barua at Jaintiapur, and they despatched a force to relieve two garrisons in the south of the Jaintia Hills. This operation was successfully performed, but, as the rainy season was now approaching and it was thought dangerous to pass it in a hostile country, both these officers agreed to retreat at once to Gobhā. Before departing, a thousand inhabitants of Jaintia were put to the sword, and Jaintiapur and all the surrounding villages were destroyed. The exasperated Jaintias attacked the Ahoms both at Jaintiapur and at Mulāgul, but were driven off. The troops then marched back by the route by which the Bar Phukan had advanced and reached Gobhā without molestation.

Rudra Singh at first intended to punish the two commanders for the ultimate failure of the expedition, but he pardoned them on the intercession of the other nobles. In the course of the rising the Ahoms had lost 2,366 men killed, including twelve high officers.* On the side of the enemy, excluding the massacre at Jaintiapur, very few were killed, but seven hundred were made prisoners. In addition, about 1,600 persons, chiefly Assamese refugees, were brought from Khāspur, and about 600 from Jaintiapur. The booty taken in the course of the expedition included three cannon, 2,273 guns, 109 elephants, 12,000 pieces of silver of the Muhammadan, Ahom, Koch and Jaintia mints, and numerous utensils of gold, silver and other metals. Certain articles of jewellery, which formed part of the loot, were misappropriated by some of the officers attached to the expedition, but they were detected and compelled to disgorge them.

Interviews between Rudra Singh and Kachāri and Jaintia kings.

On the conclusion of the expedition, Rudra Singh removed his camp from Bijaypur to Salā, while the Jaintia and Kachāri kings were kept in separate camps near Bishnāth. In the middle of April, Rudra Singh, surrounded

* Of the men who were killed 960 came from Upper Assam, 1,009 from Gauhāti, 280 from the Dhekeri country and 105 from Sonāpur. These figures throw some light on the sources on which at this time the Ahoms were able to draw for their soldiers.

by all his chief nobles, received Tāmradhvaj at a grand durbar in a tent supported by posts of gold and silver. The captive chief was conveyed across the Brahmaputra in the royal barge, and on landing, was placed on an elephant carrying a golden howdah. When he reached the camp, he descended from the elephant, and rode on horseback to the durbar tent, where he dismounted and, advancing on foot, prostrated himself and knelt down before the king. He was introduced by the Bar Barua, who recited the events which had culminated in his detention at Bishnāth. The king offered him a seat and addressed him in a speech which was practically a repetition of that already made by the Bar Barua. To this oration Tāmradhvaj made a submissive reply. He was given formal permission to return to his own country and was dismissed from the durbar with numerous presents. Before setting out he was received at a second durbar. He also paid a visit to the temple of Bishnāth, in order to worship the idol of Siva which it contained. He was given an escort of Ahom troops as far as Demerā, where he was met by a number of his own people from Khāspur.

A few days later the Jaintia Raja was received in the same way, and was told that, if his nobles would appear and make their submission, he would be allowed to return to his kingdom. The nobles, fearing to appear in person, sent submissive messages; but these were not deemed sufficient, and they were informed accordingly. Meanwhile Rām Singh succumbed to an attack of dysentery. His son, who was also a captive, gave two of his sisters in marriage to the Ahom king. No further mention is made of him in the *Buranjis*, and it may be presumed that he was released soon afterwards.

Proposed invasion of Bengal.

A few years later Rudra Singh began to make preparations for a fresh war against the Muhammadans. His motive for doing so is not very clear; according to some he merely wished to achieve a victory which should shed glory on his name, while others aver that his ambition was to include a portion of the sacred Ganges within his dominions. But whatever his object there is no doubt as to the thoroughness of his preparations. He proceeded in person to Gauhāti and there organized a great army and a powerful

fleet, and collected all his available cannon. The Kachāri and Jaintia Rajas joined his army with 14,000 and 10,000 followers, respectively, and 600 Daflas came from the hills north of the Darrang district.

But his preparations were in vain. Before they were completed he was seized with a mortal illness and died in August 1714. **Rudra Singh's death.**

The most striking events of his reign, which extended over seventeen eventful years, were the wars against the Kachāri and Jaintia kings, which have already been described. But he was by no means a mere military adventurer. Although illiterate, Rudra Singh was possessed of a retentive memory and of exceptional intelligence and power of initiative; and he is regarded by many as the greatest of all the Ahom kings. The construction of a brick city at Rangpur has already been mentioned. He caused masonry bridges to be constructed over the Nāmdāng and Dimau rivers.* The great tanks at Jaisāgar, and the temple at the same place, were made by him, and also the tank and temple at Rangnāth, and the Khārikatiya, Dubariyām and Meteka roads. He is said to have received the submission of all the hill tribes, and to have established an extensive trade with Tibet. Abandoning, to some extent, the isolating policy of his predecessors, he encouraged intercourse with other nations and sent envoys to visit the contemporary rulers of other parts of India.† He studied foreign customs and adopted those that he thought good. He imported many artificers from Bengal, and established numerous schools for the Brāhmans; he also sent many Brāhman boys to study **Character and general events of reign.**

* According to Wade the bridge over the Nāmdāng river was constructed by workmen imported from Bengal as the local masons did not possess the necessary skill (Annual Asiatic Register, 1805).

† The intercourse seems to have been of a one-sided character; and although he sent envoys to other kings, he did not apparently encourage them to return the compliment. In this respect the Ahoms appear to have conformed to the Tibetan ideas regarding foreign relations. Lord Cornwallis, in the minute which he wrote prior to Captain Welsh's expedition to Assam, said:—"However extraordinary it may appear to people in Europe, we are under the necessity of admitting that, owing to the unremitting jealousy which the chiefs of those countries have hitherto shown of the English, we know little more of the interior parts of Nepal and Assam than of the interior parts of China."

at the great centres of learning in Bengal. The survey of Sibsāgar, which had been commenced under the orders of Gadādhar Singh, was finished in this reign. Nowgong was also surveyed; and the settlement which followed was supervised by Rudra Singh himself.

Hindu proclivities.

His Hindu proclivities increased as he grew older, and he at last decided formally to embrace that religion and become an orthodox Hindu. This involved the ceremony known as "taking the *Sharan*": the neophyte prostrates himself before the *Guru*, who teaches him a secret text, or *mantra*, and takes him under his spiritual protection. Rudra Singh could not bear the thought of humbling himself in this way before a mere subject, however saintly. He therefore sent to Bengal and summoned Krishnarām Bhattāchārjya, a famous Mahant of the Sākta sect who lived at Mālipotā, near Sāntipur in the Nadia district. The Mahant was at first unwilling to come, but consented on being promised the care of the temple of Kāmākhyā, on the Nilāchal hill, just below Gauhāti. When he arrived the king changed his mind and refused to become his disciple, and the priest departed again in high dudgeon. At this moment a severe earthquake occurred which shattered several temples; and Rudra Singh, interpreting the phenomenon as an indication that the Mahant was a real favourite of the Gods, hastened to recall him. He still hesitated to take the decisive step, but satisfied the Mahant by ordering his sons and the Brāhmans of his entourage to accept him as their *Guru*. It is said by some that, when he died, his body was cremated on the Mani Karnesvar hill, instead of being buried in a vault at Charāideo according to the custom previously in vogue, and that the Rudresvar temple, which was subsequently erected by Pramata Singh in honour of his memory, stands on the spot where his body was burnt. In the *Buranjis* of the Ahoms themselves, however, it is distinctly stated that his remains were buried like those of his forefathers.

His sons.

He left five sons—by one queen, Sib Singh and Pramata Singh; by another, Barjanā Gohāin; by a third, Rājesvār Singh; and by a fourth, Lakshmi Singh. The last mentioned, being of a very dark complexion, was by no means a favourite with his father.

When Rudra Singh died, his eldest son Sib Singh, who was with him at Gauhāti, at once proceeded to Rangpur, where he ascended the throne. He assumed the Ahom name Sutānphā. He gave up the projected invasion of Bengal, but obeyed his father's injunction to become a disciple of Krishnarām Bhattāchārjya. He gave him the management of the hill temple of Kāmākhyā, whence Krishnarām and his successors are generally known as the Parbatiya Gosāins, and assigned to him for its maintenance large areas of land in various parts of the country. The modern Sāktas of Assam are the disciples of these Gosāins, or of the Nāti and Na Gosāins, who will be mentioned further on.

Sib Singh, 1714 to 1744.

In January 1717 an expedition was despatched against the Daflas who had again taken to raiding. After they had been reduced to submission, an embankment was constructed along the foot of the hills inhabited by them, as a protection against future inroads by these turbulent and restless mountaineers. With the exception of this expedition, the country enjoyed unbroken peace during this king's reign.

Dafla expedition.

Sib Singh was completely under the influence of Brāhman priests and astrologers; and in 1722 he was so alarmed by their prediction that his rule would shortly come to an end, that he not only made many and lavish presents for the support of temples and of Brāhmans, in the hope of conciliating the gods and averting the threatened calamity, but also endeavoured to satisfy the alleged decree of fate by a subterfuge which greatly diminished his prestige in the eyes of his people. He declared his chief queen Phulesvari, who assumed the name Pramatesvari (one of the names of Durgā), to be the "Bar Raja" or chief king; made over to her the royal umbrella, the Ahom emblem of sovereignty; and caused coins to be struck jointly in her name and his.*

Growing influence of Sākta priests.

* The inscriptions on the coins of Sib Singh's reign confirm this story. Those issued prior to 1724 bear his name only; those of 1724 to 1731, with one exception, are in his name and Phulesvari's; those of 1732 to 1736 in his name and Ambikā Devi's; and those of 1739 to 1744 in his name and Sarvesvari's. Some coins were issued in Sib Singh's name alone in 1732 after Phulesvari's death, and in 1738 and 1739, after the death of Ambikā Devi and before Sarvesvari became queen.

To make matters worse Phulesvari's authority was far from nominal. She was even more under the influence of the Brāhmans than her husband, and, in her consuming zeal for Sākta Hinduism, such as so often distinguishes neophytes, she committed an act of oppression which was destined to have far-reaching and disastrous consequences. Hearing that the Sudra Mahants of the Vaishnava persuasion refused to worship Durgā, she ordered the Moāmariā, and several other, Gosāins to be brought to a Sākta shrine where sacrifices were being offered, and caused the distinguishing marks of the Sākta sect to be smeared with the blood of the victims upon their foreheads. The Moāmariās never forgave this insult to their spiritual leader, and, half a century later, they broke out in open rebellion.

Phulesvari died in 1731. The king then married her sister Deopadi, and made her Bar Raja with the name Ambikā. She died about 1738, and was succeeded as Bar Raja by another wife named Enādari who was renamed Sarbesvari.

Death of king. Further progress of Hinduism.

Sib Singh himself died in 1744. He erected numerous temples and gave away land for the support of Brāhmans and temples with all the generosity of a new convert.† According to one *Buranji* he was himself the writer of a number of hymns. Thanks to his support, Hinduism became the predominant religion, and the Ahoms who persisted in holding to their old beliefs and tribal customs came to be regarded as a separate and degraded class. The Deodhāis and Bailongs resisted the change with all their might, and succeeded, for some time longer, in enforcing the observance of certain ceremonies, such as the worship of the Somdeo. But the people gradually fell away from them, took Hindu priests, and abandoned the free use of meat and strong drinks. The change was a disastrous one. By accepting a subordinate

† Nineteen out of the forty-eight inscribed copper-plates recording grants of land by Ahom kings which have been examined refer to grants made by this king. The others are distributed as follows: Gadādhar Singh, 3; Rudra Singh, 3; Pramata Singh, 3; Rājesvar Singh, 7; Lakshmi Singh, 6; Gaurināth Singh, 4; Kamalesvar Singh, 2; and Chandrakānta Singh, 1.

place in the hierarchy of Hinduism, not only did the Ahoms lose their pride of race and martial spirit, but, with a less nourishing diet, their physique also underwent a change for the worse. The process of deterioration has gone on steadily, and no one, looking at an average Ahom of the present day, would suspect him of being the descendant of a race of conquerors who, though small in number, gradually extended their rule over the whole of the Brahmaputra valley, and successfully resisted the assaults of the Mughals, even when the latter were at the zenith of their power.

Sib Singh is said to have established such an elaborate system of espionage that he had accurate information of everything that was done, or even spoken, in all parts of his dominions.

During this reign the chief public works were the Dhāi Ali, and the tanks and temples at Gaurisāgar, Sibsāgar, and Kālugāon. Surveys were effected in Kāmrup and Bakatā. The register, or *Pera Kāgaz*, based on this survey of Kāmrup, was still extant at the time of the British conquest. It contained a list of all occupied lands, except homestead, with their areas, and particulars of all rent-free estates.

Visit of four Europeans.

It is recorded that in 1739 four Europeans, whose names appear to have been Bill, Godwin, Lister, and Mill, visited Sib Singh at Rangpur. The king met them at the principal gate of the city where, it is said, they did him homage by falling prostrate at his feet.

Pramata Singh, 1744 to 1751.

On the death of Sib Singh the nobles passed over his sons, and raised Rudra Singh's second son, Pramata Singh, to the throne. He assumed the Ahom name Sunenphā and was formally installed by the Deodhāis. Soon afterwards, a conspiracy was detected, and the culprits were punished with mutilation and stripes.

In 1745 a fresh survey was made, and a census was taken in the same year. New buildings and masonry gateways were constructed at Garhgāon, and the Rangghar, or amphitheatre for animal fights, was built at Rangpur. The Rudresvar and Sukresvar temples were erected at Gauhāti. Pramata Singh was a kind and lenient ruler. He died in 1751 after a prosperous but uneventful reign of seven years.

Rājesvar Singh, 1751 to 1769.

Rudra Singh's third son, Barjanā Gohāin, was considered ineligible, as he was pitted with small-pox, and was passed over in favour of the fourth son, Rājesvar Singh *alias* Surāmphā, who was installed with the usual ceremonies. His first act was to exile Barjanā Gohāin to Nāmrup. There was a conflict of opinion between the Ahom and Hindu astrologers as to the place where the new king ought to reside. The former recommended Taimung, and the latter, Rangpur. The king listened to the advice of the Hindu astrologers, and built his palace at Rangpur; but he afterwards erected a second residence at Taimung. Both buildings were of brick and of considerable size.

The Bar Barua's ascendancy.

This king, though an able man, preferred pleasure to the affairs of state, and left the government in the hands of his Bar Barua, Kirti Chandra Gendhela. The latter was of an overbearing disposition and soon incurred the dislike of the other nobles. The Numali Bar Gohāin wrote a *Buranji*, in which he made certain aspersions regarding the purity of his descent. The Bar Barua disproved the allegations and, on the plea that the publication of such falsehoods might cause much harm in future, and that, if it were allowed, the origin of the king himself might be impugned, obtained the assent of the king to a detailed examination of all the *Buranjis* in existence at that time. Those which contained anything that was considered objectionable were burnt. These proceedings added to the Bar Barua's unpopularity and a plot was formed to assassinate him. He was attacked as he was entering the palace, but escaped with a few wounds. The conspirators were all caught. Two of the ringleaders were impaled and one was fried to death in oil. The others were deprived of their noses and ears.

Dafla raid.

In 1758 the Daflas, who had never yet been properly subdued, committed several raids near Ghilādhāri. As a punishment, forts were erected along the frontier, and the Daflas were prohibited from entering the plains. The blockade had the desired effect. A deputation came down from the hills and gave up the captives, and brought presents for Rājesvar Singh. The king, however, was not satisfied, and caused members of the deputation to be arrested. Their relatives retaliated by seizing thirty-five Assamese and two

cannon. This led to an exchange of captives, and an agreement was made whereby the Daflas were permitted to levy yearly from each family in the Duārs, or submontane tract along the foot of the hills, a *pura* of paddy and three hundred and twenty cowries, on condition of their refraining from other acts of aggression.

Mikir expedition.

In July 1765 it was found necessary to undertake punitive operations against the Mikirs. Two forces were sent against them. The one entered the hills at the back of Chāpānāla, while the other ascended the Kopili and Jamuna rivers to take the offending villages in the rear. The result was most satisfactory. The two forces, having effected a junction in the hills, defeated the Mikirs and burnt down their houses and granaries. The Mikirs then came in with tribute, and begged for forgiveness.

Visit from Kāchari Raja.

In the following November, Rājesvar Singh sent messengers to summon to his presence the Kachāri king, Sandhikāri, but the latter refused to receive them. The Bar Barua thereupon proceeded with an army to Rahā. This had the desired effect, and the Kachāri monarch came in and made his submission. He was accompanied by Raja Jai Singh of Manipur, who had taken shelter with him, owing to the invasion of his country by the Burmese. Both rulers were taken before Rājesvar Singh, who, after admonishing the Kachāri Raja, allowed him to return to his country.*

Expedition to oust the Burmese from Manipur.

Jai Singh made an urgent appeal to Rājesvar Singh for help, and the latter, after consulting his nobles, agreed to send an army to Manipur to reinstate him. A force was collected, but several officers in succession refused to accept the command on the plea of ill-health. These were dismissed and deprived of all their property. At last a commander was found and the army started. It was proposed to march direct through the hills south of Charāideo, but the jungle

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* This is the usual version, but in the *Buranji* in which the incident is most fully dealt with, it is stated that the expedition was undertaken in consequence of an appeal for help from Sandhikāri, uncle of Ramā the Kachāri king, who reported that the Tipperas had invaded the country and that Ramā had fled to Manipur, while he himself had taken refuge at Maibong. There is, however, no mention of any conflict with the Tipperas.

was so dense that the work of clearing a road was most laborious and progress was very slow. The troops suffered great hardships and many died from the effects of exposure and insufficient food; many also were killed by the Nāgas, and some died of snake-bite. The state of things was reported to the king who ordered the troops to return.

In November 1768 a second force was despatched by way of Rahā, and the Kachāri country. The main body halted at Rahā, and a force of ten thousand men accompanied Jai Singh as far as the Mirāp river, where it remained until Jai Singh raised a force of Nāgas and drove out the usurper Kelemba, who had been placed on the Manipur throne by the Burmese.* He subsequently sent valuable presents to Rājesvar Singh and gave him a daughter in marriage. A number of Manipuris who accompanied her were settled near the mouth of the Desoi at Magaluhāt, or "the Manipuri market."

Threatened rupture with Jaintia.

In 1769 the Jaintia Raja moved towards the Ahom frontier with a body of troops. The king proposed to call on him to appear and explain his movements. The majority of the nobles suggested that nothing should be done until it became clear that he had hostile intentions, but they were overruled by the Bar Barua, who marched to Rahā with a force of all arms. The Jaintia Raja was alarmed and withdrew.

Rājesvar Singh's death; character and general events of his reign.

Soon afterwards the king became seriously ill and died after an illness lasting twenty days. Though indolent, he was a capable prince. During his reign the people enjoyed internal order and immunity from external aggression. They had now become very prosperous, but there were already signs of the approaching decay. The warlike spirit which animated their ancestors had almost wholly evaporated, and, for the first time, we find high officers refusing to go on active service. The people were already priest-ridden, and sectarian disputes had begun to strangle their patriotic aspirations. The Moāmariā Gosāin was brooding over his

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* This is the story told by Dr. Brown in his *Statistical Account of Manipur*. According to the chronicles of the Ahoms the usurper's name was Bairang and he was put to death.

wrongs, and was secretly spreading disaffection amongst his disciples.

The king himself was a strict Hindu. He erected many temples and gave much land to the Brāhmans. Soon after his accession he paid a long visit to Gauhāti to worship at the various temples there. He took the *sharan* from a relative of the Parbatiyā Gosāin, known as the Nāti Gosāin, and gave him a temple at Pāndunāth. He was a great patron of learned men. In his reign the Monās was the Ahom boundary on the north of the Brahmaputra. South of that river it was 21 miles further east.*

Lakshmi Singh, 1769 to 1780.

There was a difference of opinion among the nobles as to the proper successor to the throne. One party, headed by Kirti Chandra Bar Barua, who had hurried back from Rahā as soon as he heard of Rājesvar Singh's illness, was in favour of appointing the Nāmrup Raja, Lakshmi Singh, the youngest son of Rudra Singh, and alleged that, on his death-bed, Rudra Singh had expressed a wish that all his sons should succeed to the throne in turn. The Bar Gohāin and others denied this, and supported the claim of Rājesvar's eldest son; they revived an old scandal that threw doubts on Lakshmi Singh's legitimacy, and pointed out that he had been born in his putative father's old age, and was so entirely different from him in colour and features that Rudra Singh himself had doubted if he were really his son. In the end Lakshmi Singh was selected. He took the Ahom name Sunyeophā. It is said that the Parbatiya Gosāin refused to recognize him on the score of his alleged illegitimacy, and that he imported from Bengal a new priest, also a Sākta, who was the first of the Na Gosāins.

Rājesvar's remains were cremated on the bank of the Brahmaputra and the ashes were interred at Charāideo. His two sons, the Rajas of Tipām and Sāring, were banished with their families to Nāmrup.

Lakshmi Singh was already fifty-three years of age when he became king. He left the management of his affairs in the hands of the Bar Barua, who had been

* Rennell, *Memoirs of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, page 57.

instrumental in raising him to the throne, and who thus became more arrogant than ever. One day, when he was travelling with the king in the royal barge, the Moāmariā Gosāin happened to be standing on the bank. He saluted the king, but failed to take any notice of the Bar Barua, who was infuriated at the imagined slight and heaped on him all manner of insulting epithets. The Mahanta was greatly incensed and his disaffection became more pronounced than before. Soon afterwards, the chief of the Morān tribe,* named Nāhar, when bringing elephants for the king, incurred the Bar Barua's wrath by going direct to the palace instead of first paying his respects to him. The haughty official caused him to be seized and beaten, and ordered his ears to be cut off. The unfortunate man, who happened to be a disciple of the Moāmariā Gosāin, hastened to him and invoked his aid.

The first Moāmariā rebellion.

The Gosāin who was perhaps only too glad to have some ostensible motive, other than his own personal wrongs, at once resolved on rebellion. He collected his disciples and appointing his son Bāngan to lead them, entered Nāmrup. He was received with great enthusiasm by the inhabitants, chiefly Morāns and Kachāris, all of whom became his disciples. His son Bāngan assumed the title of Raja of Nāmrup. The king's elder brother, Barjanā Gohāin, was induced to join the rebels, who promised to place him on the throne, and many other banished princes followed his example. When news of the rising reached the king, he sent men to seize Bāngan, but they were themselves taken and put to death. The insurgents then advanced to Tipām.

The first fight with the king's troops who were sent to oppose them took place on the banks of the Dibru river. The Moāmariās were driven back. They renewed the attack, but were unable to capture the entrenchments which the

* The terms Morān, Matak and Moāmariā are often used discriminately, but they are in reality quite distinct. Morān is the name of a tribe, and Moāmariā that of a sect, while Matak refers to the country once ruled by the Bar Senapati. When the Singphos began to raid, they found the people of this tract better able to defend themselves than those residing under the decayed power of the Ahoms, and so called them Matak, strong, as distinguished from the Mullong, or weak, subjects of the Ahoms. The Bar Senapati was a Chutiya by tribe.

royalists had thrown up. Then they also entrenched themselves, and for several months little progress was made on either side.

In October 1769, a Morān named Rāgha, who styled himself Bar Barua, led an insurgent force down the north bank of the Brahmaputra and defeated the royalist troops in several engagements. The king was greatly alarmed, and summoned a council of his nobles to decide what should be done. The Burhā Gohāin proposed that messengers should be sent to make terms with Rāgha, but he was overruled by the Bar Barua and other nobles, who said that such a course would be too humiliating, and counselled flight to Gauhāti. The king determined to follow their advice, and at once left Rangpur. Many of his officers deserted him at the outset, and others left him when he reached Sonārinagar. Rāgha, who was already on his way to Rangpur, arrived there too late to prevent the king's departure. He at once sent men in pursuit; they came up with him at Sonārinagar, and he was brought back and confined in the temple of Jaysāgar. A number of his nobles were arrested at the same time. A few of them were put to death, but the majority were merely kept in confinement.

Hearing the news, the Barjanā Gohāin hastened towards the capital, in the hope of being raised to the throne, according to the promise previously made to him. He was, however, arrested under Rāgha's orders and put to death. Kirti Chandra, the deposed Bar Barua, was also put to death. His sons shared his fate, and his wives and daughters were distributed amongst the Moāmariā leaders. Lakshmi Singh remained in captivity; and it is related that, when Rāgha paid him a visit, his demeanour was so cringing and abject that Rāgha thought he had nothing to fear from him.

Rāmākānt is made king by the rebels.

Bāngan was now hailed as king by Rāgha, but his father, the Moāmariā Gosāin, forbade him to accept the offer, and caused Rāmākānt, a son of the Morān chief Nāhar, to be raised to the throne. Two other sons of Nāhar were appointed Rajas of Tipām and Sāring, while the other leaders of the insurgents were rewarded with the various high offices of state, and took possession of the houses belonging to the persons whom they thus supplanted.

Rāgha himself retained the post of Bar Barua, which he had already assumed, and took into his harem the wives of the deposed king and the widows of his predecessor Rājesvar, including the Manipuri princess who had been the wife of both brothers in turn. Coins were minted in Rāmākānt's name, dated 1691 Sak (1769 A.D.), but the real power vested in Rāgha, who disposed of all important public business. All the Gosāins of Upper Assam were compelled to acknowledge the spiritual supremacy of the Moāmariā high priest, and large sums of money were extorted from them on various pretexts.

For several months the new régime met with no overt opposition but, in the interior, the people still looked to the dismissed officers of Lakshmi Singh as their real rulers. This gave great displeasure to Rāmākānt, and, after taking council with his followers, he resolved to seize and put all the old officers to death. The execution of the king was also decided on.

Successful counter-revolution.

News of this sanguinary decision reached the ears of the royalist leaders, who met together and determined, before it was too late, to make a last effort to overthrow the usurpers and restore the old administration. Their plans were facilitated by the fact that the great majority of the insurgents had dispersed to their homes, and that Rāmākānt and his satellites had thus only a comparatively small number of supporters present in the capital. In April, 1770, on the night before the *Bihu* festival, Rāgha's house was surrounded, and he was dragged out and put to death. According to some, the first blow was struck from behind by the Manipuri princess. Rāmākānt escaped for a time, but his father and other relatives, and many of his officers, were caught and put to death.

Lakshmi Singh was now brought back in triumph, and a vigorous persecution of the Moāmariās was set on foot. Their Gosāin was taken, tortured and impaled, and Rāmākānt and many of his followers shared the same fate. The rest fled to Nāmrup, where most of them were captured and killed.

Fresh rising suppressed.

These severities soon led to a fresh rising, in which the Chungis of Nāmrup were the ringleaders. An expedition

was despatched against them, but met with scant success. Reinforcements were hurried up, but the Moāmariās gradually forced their way forward. They were defeated by some mounted Manipuri mercenaries on the bank of the Desang, but soon rallied. They were defeated again and took shelter in a forest, but their resistance was still not broken. They constructed a fort in a remote part of the forest and, with this as a refuge and rallying point, they continued to give trouble for some time. Then, for a few years, no mention is made of them, and they were apparently satisfied to be left alone until a favourable opportunity should occur for renewing the struggle.

Installation of Lakshmi Singh.

Owing to the Moāmariā rising, it had hitherto been found impossible formally to instal Lakshmi Singh but, as soon as quiet was restored, the usual ceremony was performed on a grand scale.

More attempts at rebellion.

But even now he was not destined to reign in peace. One conspiracy was detected, and then another; in both cases the conspirators were put to death. The Kalita Phukan was dismissed in December, 1774, either in consequence of complaints of his exactions made by the people of Nārāyanpur or, as some say, at the instance of the chief nobles, who suspected him of speaking evil of them to the king. He thereupon proceeded to Tāmulbāri on the north bank of the Lohit, and proclaimed himself king, assuming the name Mirhang. He collected a force and erected a fort at Kechāmāti, but, when an army was sent against him, his men deserted him, and he was obliged to seek safety in flight. He was caught at Dhekerijuri, but bribed his captors and escaped. He sought an asylum with the Daflas, but they refused to shelter him, and he was eventually recaptured and executed.

In 1779, a Narā of Khāmjāng, who had fled from his own country and had been given land near Sadiyā, raised a body of Chutiyas and Mishmis and headed a local rebellion. He killed the Sadiyā Khowa Gohāin, but beat a precipitate retreat on the approach of reinforcements from Rangpur. His followers took refuge in a forest, where they were hunted down, and many of them were caught and punished.

Lakshmi Singh's death.

Lakshmi Singh's health had been failing for some time, and he suffered from chronic dysentery. He made his eldest son Jubrāj and died in December 1780 in the 67th year of his age.

Character and miscellaneous events of reign.

He was never a strong prince, and his nerves were completely shattered by the Moāmariā rising. After his restoration the Deodhāis endeavoured to regain their former influence by ascribing the misfortunes into which the country had fallen to the adoption of Hindu beliefs and practices and the abandonment of the old tribal observances of their forefathers. They pointed out that many projects had miscarried, owing to their having been commenced on days selected by the Ganaks as auspicious, whereas, according to the calculations of the Ahom astrologers, they were the very reverse. They laid special stress on the fact that the late king's body had been cremated, instead of being buried as those of his ancestors had been. To undo the mischief, they made an effigy of Rājesvar in clay and, having performed with it the *Rikkhvān* ceremony for the restoration of life, and offered sacrifice to the gods, they buried it with the rites usually observed at the interment of an Ahom king. For some time after this, Lakshmi Singh seems to have been favourably disposed towards the Deodhāis, and their prognostications were again attended to. The Hindus, however, soon regained their influence, and it is recorded that, at the suggestion of the Na Gosāin, the Goddess Tārā was worshipped with great ceremony, and an immense amount of money was distributed to the Brāhmans. The Deodhāis refused to take any part in these proceedings.

Several Hindu temples were erected and the great Rudra Sāgar tank was excavated under the orders of this king. He demolished one of the towers of his palace and also a lofty building known as the Talātulgarh, in order to provide materials for a bridge over the Dikhu river. The bridge, however, was never built.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE DECAY AND FALL OF THE AHOM KINGDOM.

THE nobles placed the Jubrāj, Gaurināth Singh on the vacant throne, and he was installed as king with the usual ceremonies. He assumed the Ahom name Suhitpāngphā. He ordered his father's body to be cremated and the ashes to be intombed at Chāraideo, after a funeral ceremony performed according to Hindu rites. He caused the other princes of the blood to be mutilated, in order to render them ineligible for the succession. He chose the Bar Barua as his chief adviser. The latter set himself to poison the king's mind against the Bar Gohāin, with whom he was on bad terms; he accused him of having been opposed to Gaurināth's elevation to the throne and, on this charge, which seems to have been wholly unsubstantiated, the unfortunate man and several of his near relatives were beheaded. But the Bar Barua's triumph was of very short duration. He gave great offence to the king by disposing of important matters without consulting him, and was dismissed from his office and deprived of all his possessions.

Gaurināth Singh, 1780 to 1795.

Gaurināth chose as his religious preceptor a son of Rāmānanda Achārjya and underwent the ceremony of initiation as his disciple.

He was a bitter enemy of the Moāmariās and lost no opportunity of oppressing them. At last they were goaded into a fresh rebellion. One night, in April, 1782, when the king was returning to Garhgāon at a late hour after a fishing expedition, a band of them attached themselves to his party, disguised as torch bearers, and after thus gaining admittance to the town, attacked and killed several of the king's attendants. Gaurināth himself managed to escape to his palace on an elephant. The insurgents tried to set fire to the town, but were frustrated by the Burhā Gohāin, who hurried up with a party of soldiers and, after a sharp struggle, drove them away. They next marched to Rangpur and,

The Moāmariās again rebel.

failing to obtain an entry by stratagem, broke down the gates and paraded the streets, killing all whom they met and setting the houses on fire. The local officials fled, but the Burhā Gohāin, who had followed them from Garhgāon, soon succeeded in dispersing them.

This energetic and capable officer, of whom more will be heard later on, seeing that harsh methods frustrated their own ends, now urged the king to win over the malcontents by mild and conciliatory treatment, and, if his advice had been followed, it seems likely that the Moāmariās would have given no further trouble. But it was not. The new Bar Barua taking the opposite view, advocated their wholesale extermination; and this course commended itself to the cruel and vindictive nature of the king. A general massacre of the Moāmariās was proclaimed; many thousands, including women and children, were put to death, and four sons of the deposed Bar Barua, who were found to have been cognizant of the rising, were deprived of their eyesight. These atrocities served only to fan the flames of disaffection, and conspiracy succeeded conspiracy. The first was hatched at Jaysāgar by a Mahanta belonging to the Jakhalābāndhā Gosāin's family. He was caught and blinded, and three of his followers were fried to death in oil. The Morāns in the extreme east next broke out in rebellion, under a man named Badal Gāonburha, but they were dispersed without much trouble.

This abortive rising was followed, early in 1786, by a more serious revolt of the Moāmariās on the north bank of the Lohit. An expedition which was despatched to quell it was cut up, and many other malcontents then flocked to the rebel camp. Fresh troops were sent, but they too were defeated in an engagement near the Garaimāri bil. The chiefs of Rāni, Luki and Beltolā were asked for help, and sent up a force, which was at once despatched to Pahumāra in the Mājuli. The Moāmariās responded by crossing the Lohit at Gorāmur and attacking the Gorāmur *sattra*, which was taken after a feeble resistance by the Gosāin's disciples. They then marched against the Gauhāti levies and put them to flight with heavy loss. The remnant of the royalist army on the north bank, on hearing of these

disasters, recrossed the Lohit and the Dihing* and joined the Burhā Gohāin, who was in command of another force, and had entrenched himself at Sonāri. He was in his turn attacked and defeated; he retreated, first to Gaurisāgar and then to Rangpur, where he rejoined the king. He was closely followed by the Moāmariās, who laid waste the country and burnt the villages along their line of march. They made their headquarters at Bhatiāpār, and defeated in turn several forces sent against them. They were, however, foiled in an attempt to take Rangpur and fell back to the Mājuli. Gaurināth now sent urgent appeals for help to the Bar Phukan at Gauhāti, and also to the Manipuri, Kachāri and Jaintia kings, but meanwhile the Moāmariās again advanced, along the bank of the Jhānsi river, and, bearing down all resistance, appeared before the gates of Rangpur.

Gaurināth flies to Gauhāti.

The king fled panic stricken to Gauhāti, accompanied by most of his officers. The Burhā Gohāin Purnānand, with the Bar Barua and a few others, courageously remained behind and endeavoured to stem the tide of rebellion. On reaching Gauhāti, Gaurināth Singh found the Bar Phukan preparing to start to his assistance. He held a council, and despatched thirteen thousand men under the Pāni Phukan to reinforce the Burhā Gohāin, but, before they arrived, the Moāmariās had again defeated the royalists and taken possession of Garhgāon. They burnt down the palace and destroyed many of the neighbouring villages; and the common people, finding themselves unprotected, began to throw in their lot with the rebels.

Burhā Gohāin continues to resist Moāmariās.

The Burhā Gohāin had retreated as far as the Kāziranga river when he met the Pāni Phukan with the

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* By the Dihing, the present course of the Brahmaputra south of the Mājuli is meant, but the use of this name by no means proves that the main channel of the Lohit, or Brahmaputra, still flowed to the north of the Mājuli at the period in question. The Assamese, like other Indian races, are very conservative in the matter of names, and the southern channel river was still called the Dihing when the map in Wilson's *Narrative of the Burmese War* (London, 1852) was prepared. According to common tradition in Assam, the change in the course of the Brahmaputra was caused by a flood brought down by the Dibong river in 1735, or more than half a century earlier. The northern channel, however, must still have carried a considerable volume of water, as we read that on one occasion Lakshmi Singh was prevented by a storm from crossing it.

reinforcements from Gauhāti. He then assumed the offensive and inflicted several minor defeats on the rebels. But soon afterwards, a force under the Pāni Phukan was cut up in a night attack, and another force, under the Dhekiāl Phukan, was so demoralized that it dispersed in confusion on the approach of the fugitives, whom it mistook for Moāmariās. The Burhā Gohāin with great difficulty rallied his men, but he could no longer hope to do more than prevent a further advance on the part of the rebels. With this object, he constructed a line of forts along the Nāmdāng river, from the Bar Āli to the Khari Katiā Ali, which he succeeded in holding until March 1788, when a son of Raja Rājesvar Singh, known as the Pātkuar, collected a force, and, after defeating several detachments of the insurgents, joined hands with him. Meanwhile the Moāmariās, who were suffering from want of supplies, relaxed their efforts, and the Pātkuar, deeming the time opportune for a fresh advance, moved forward and occupied Sibsāgar. His success was short-lived. Soon afterwards he was ambushed, taken prisoner and put to death.

The Burhā Gohāin, undaunted by this fresh disaster, continued to hold his position on the Nāmdāng; and in February, 1789, with the aid of further reinforcements from Gauhāti, he was able once more to advance against the rebels. For some time he was successful, but in the end he was driven back on Gaurisāgar, where he was closely invested. Provisions ran so short that his troops were fain to eat the flesh of horses and elephants. Many died of starvation and dysentery, and his forces were so depleted by the direct and indirect losses of the campaign that he was at last obliged to retreat, first to Tarātali and then to the Desoi. Here he erected a fort and placed it under the command of Japarā Gohāin. He then proceeded to Rajanikhāt, west of Kachārihāt. Japarā was no sooner left to himself than he declared himself independent, but, being unwary enough to be enticed into the power of the Burhā Gohāin, he was made prisoner and his eyes were put out.

After halting for some time at Sungighāt and Charāibāhi, the Burhā Gohāin, in April 1790, constructed a fortified position at Jorhāt. He placed an outpost at Meleng.

but it was soon afterwards destroyed by the Moāmariās. Gaurināth now sent up four hundred Bengal mercenaries and, with their aid, the Burhā Gohāin made a fort at Teok. On the advent of the rainy season, however, he again fell back behind the Desoi river. The Moāmariās captured an advanced position on the Kokila river, but they were repulsed with heavy loss in a subsequent attack on a fort near the Bar Āli, on the right bank of the Desoi. This reverse appears to have disheartened them; and for some time they abstained from regular fighting, and resorted to guerilla tactics. They harassed the inhabitants of the tract held by the Burhā Gohāin by constant raids, especially at night, when small bodies would pass up the Dhansiri and Kākakān streams, plunder some village on the banks, and disappear again before they could be intercepted.

Sufferings of the people.

The people gradually lost heart and would gladly have accepted the Moāmariā supremacy, but for the untiring efforts of the Burhā Gohāin, who alternately coaxed them by presents of food and clothing and coerced them by inflicting severe punishment on those who disobeyed his orders. But if their sufferings were great, their condition was still far better than that of the people living in the country held by the Moāmariās, where the burning of villages, the looting of supplies and the wanton destruction of crops led to a terrible famine: rice was not obtainable, and the sufferings of the people were so great that many abandoned their own children. Even persons of the highest castes, it is said, were reduced to eating the flesh of cows, buffaloes, dogs and jackals. Some roamed about in the jungle, devouring wild fruits and roots, while others fled to the Burhā Gohāin or to the neighbouring hill tribes, and even to Bengal.

Numerous petty Rajas appear.

During these operations a number of *soi-disant* Rajas had appeared in various parts of the country. On the north bank of the Lohit, at Japaribhitā, a man of the weaver caste was set up by the Moāmariās; in the Mājuli, a man named Hāulia exercised supreme power; east of the Dihing, at Bengmarā, the Morāns acknowledged one Sarbānand as their ruler; while at Sadiya the Khāmtis appeared on the scene with a Raja and Deka Raja of their own. The main

body of the Moāmariās at Rangpur placed Bharath Singh on the throne and appointed one Sukura as his Bar Barua.

Bharath Singh and Sarbānand both opened mints. Coins of the former dated 1791, 1792, 1793, 1795 and 1797 are still extant, and of the latter dated 1794 and 1795. Bharath Singh described himself on his coins as a descendant of Bhagadatta, while Sarbānand used the Ahom title, Svargadeb.

Ineffectual intervention of Raja of Manipur.

It has been mentioned that Gaurināth sent an appeal for help to the kings of the neighbouring states. The Kachāri and Jaintia Rajas were only too glad to hear that their once dreaded neighbour was in difficulties, and absolutely refused to give him any assistance. But the Manipuri Raja was mindful of the services rendered him a few years previously by Gaurināth's uncle, Rājesvar, and marched with five hundred horse and four thousand foot to Nowgong, where he was met by Gaurināth. He then proceeded upcountry to assist the Burhā Gohāin. The latter proposed that he should make an attack on Rangpur. He agreed, and advanced to Gaurisāgar with his own troops and a detachment of the Burhā Gohāin's force. Next day he moved on towards Rangpur, but, when he approached the Moāmariā lines, the latter at once gave battle and, after a short engagement, put his troops to flight. Many were killed during the fight and more in the pursuit that followed; and the martial ardour of the Raja was so effectually quenched that he lost no time in hastening back to Manipur. He left a thousand of his men with the Burhā Gohāin, but they proved quite useless, and deserted in a body on the approach of the Moāmariās.

The Burhā Gohāin, however, still managed to hold his own; and in 1792, after repulsing an attack made by the Moāmariās on his position along the Desoi river, advanced his line of defence to the Ladaigarh.

Insurrections in Lower Assam.

After his interview with the Manipur Raja, Gaurināth stayed for some time in Nowgong. His numerous followers irritated the villagers by their constant demands for supplies and other acts of oppression, and the discontent thus caused at last found vent in open revolt. The leader of the rebels was a man named Sinduri Hājarika. An attack was made

on the king who fled precipitately up the Kallang river. He took shelter for a short time in the *Sattras* of the Auniāti and Dakhinpāt Gosāins, and then went downstream to Gauhāti. Here fresh troubles awaited him.

Some time previously he had treacherously seized and put to death Hangsa Nārāyan, the tributary Raja of Darrang, on an unproved charge of sedition, and set up in his place another member of the family named Bishnu Nārāyan, thereby ignoring the claims of Krishna Nārāyan, the son of the late chief. The latter, stung by the injustice, went to Mr. Douglas, the Commissioner of Koch Bihār, and, through him, sought the aid of the British. He offered, if reinstated, to hold his estate as their vassal, in the same way as his ancestors had done under the Mughals, into whose possessions the British had now entered. Failing in his appeal, he determined to act for himself. He collected a force of Hindustanis and Bengalis, drove out Gaurināth's nominee and proclaimed himself Raja of Darrang. Finding that there was no one to oppose him, he proceeded to annex the northern part of Kāmrup and even took possession of North Gauhāti.

Gaurināth appeals to the British.

Gaurināth appealed for help to Mr. Lumsden, the Collector of Rangpur. A merchant named Raush, the farmer of the salt revenue at Goālpāra, who is said by some to have recruited mercenaries in Bengal for the Burhā Gohāin, also wrote in his behalf. The matter was referred to Lord Cornwallis, the Governor-General, who held that, as the trouble appeared to have been caused by gangs of marauders from British territory, it was incumbent on the Government to take such steps as might be necessary to restore order. A message was sent to the leaders of these gangs, directing them to return to British territory. They refused to do so, and it was, therefore, decided to expel them by force.

Captain Welsh is sent to help him.

Accordingly, in September, 1792, six companies of sixty sepoys each were sent to Goālpāra under the command of Captain Welsh, with Lieutenant Macgregor as adjutant, and Ensign Wood as surveyor. The commandant's orders were to proceed to the town of Goālpāra and, after making careful local enquiries, to submit a full report to the Governor-

General, on receipt of which, he was told, detailed instructions would be given him. The modern district of Goālpāra had become a British possession in 1765, when the whole of the Muhammadan possessions in Bengal were ceded to the East India Company. At the time of these events, it formed part of the district of Rangpur. The town from which it derives its name was the great emporium of trade with Assam. There was a military outpost at Jogighopā on the opposite bank, but there was no resident civil officer, and the place was but seldom visited by the Rangpur officials. The only European inhabitant was Mr. Raush, who had been there since 1768. Captain Welsh reached Goālpāra on the 8th November 1792. He obtained from Mr. Raush a long account of the troubles that beset the Ahom king, and further details were supplied by Bishnu Nārāyan, the fugitive Raja of Darrang.* He thus learnt that matters were far more serious than had been supposed when he left Calcutta and that, if he was to be of any assistance, prompt measures were called for. He decided to proceed at once to the Raja's relief without waiting for further instructions from head-quarters.

Recovery of Gauhāti.

He wrote to the Governor-General informing him of his decision, and on the 16th November started up the river towards Gauhāti.† Three days later, as the heavy boats conveying the detachment were labouring up the stream, about three miles below the Nāgarberā hill, a few canoes appeared in the distance. As they approached the fleet, they were hailed, and were found to contain Gaurināth and a few attendants, who had escaped with him from Gauhāti at two o'clock on the previous morning. The immediate cause of his flight was not the advance of Krishna Nārāyan, but a

* Bishnu Nārāyan showed Captain Welsh a letter from Gaurināth in which he compared himself to a heavy-laden ship on the point of sinking.

† This letter was crossed by one from Lord Cornwallis, relaxing the original order that no action was to be taken pending further instructions. Welsh was now told to act as seemed best according to circumstances until more specific instructions could be given for his guidance; it was added that mediation should be sought and bloodshed avoided if possible, but that if Krishna Nārāyan proved hostile or insincere, vigorous measures should be taken.

raid by a mob of Doms, or fishermen, from Pākariguri, who had banded themselves together under a Bairāgi† and, descending the Brahmaputra, had set fire to some houses near the king's residence. The Raja and his advisers had by this time become so demoralized that even this contemptible foe sufficed to inspire them with frantic terror, and they fled hastily without making the slightest effort at resistance.

Gaurināth begged Captain Welsh to continue his journey, and declared that he had many adherents who would openly declare for him if he returned accompanied by a sufficient force. The advance was, therefore, continued. On the 21st November, the Bar Barua, who had also fled, attached himself to the expedition. On the 23rd Hātimorā was reached, and the tributary chief of Rāni joined the party. Next evening the boats arrived at a point about eight miles west of Gauhāti. Leaving a company in charge of the boats and the Raja, Captain Welsh, with the remaining five companies and several nobles, including the Bar Barua, made a night march to Gauhāti, apparently along the line now followed by the Trunk Road. The gateway near the town was reached without adventure. Hearing footsteps, the men on duty went out with torches, but, on seeing the sepoys, they threw them down and fled in all directions, without even giving the alarm. The troops crossed in silence the wooden bridge which then spanned the Bharalu river and, making straight for the Bairāgi's house, surprised and overpowered the occupants. In all, sixty persons were made prisoners and handed over to the Raja's people, who were told to treat them kindly. No resistance was anywhere encountered, and the ensuing day was spent in pitching camp and securing the position occupied by the troops.

The Raja arrived in the evening with the boats and at once made his entry into the town in great state. At his own request he was given a guard of sepoys.

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† This is the "Burjee Raja" of Captain Welsh's reports. In these reports Gaurināth is generally referred to as the Surgey Deo, a corruption of Svargadeb. Ordinarily *Bairāgi* means an ascetic or religious recluse. The Ahoms, however, used the term as the designation of their envoys to other kings.

Proceedings at Gauhāti.

Negotiations were now opened with Krishna Nārāyan, and also with the leaders of his mercenaries, or *barkandāzes,* whom it was sought to induce to return home by the payment of all arrears of salary and the release of their property in Bengal, which had been attached. The replies to these overtures, though couched in respectful and conciliatory terms, were thought to be evasive, and Krishna Nārāyan was called upon to prove his good faith by marching into Gauhāti.

Up to this time the sole object of the expedition had been the suppression of the freebooters whom Krishna Nārāyan had brought up from Bengal, and it had never been suggested that it should concern itself with the Moāmariā rebellion in Upper Assam, of which indeed Government does not hitherto appear to have been cognizant.* Now, however, finding that he was totally unable to stand alone, and realizing, perhaps, that the assistance hitherto accorded him had been rendered without any selfish after-thought, Gaurināth stated that he wished to place himself unreservedly in the hands of the British Government and begged for assistance against all his enemies.

This completely changed the position, and the petition was referred to the Governor-General for orders. Captain Welsh himself was in favour of acceding to it, but he pointed out that, in the event of his views finding acceptance, it would be necessary to send another battalion to join him at Gauhāti, and to post a second one as a reserve at Bijni on the north bank; he also asked for a couple of six-pounders and transport cattle sufficient for the whole detachment, as none could be procured in Assam.

Lord Cornwallis, in his reply, highly commended Captain Welsh for his conduct of the expedition, but said that before a final decision could be given regarding the proposed extension of the original programme, the Raja

* There is, at least, no mention of it in the late Sir James Johnstone's elaborate summary of the official correspondence. It should be mentioned, however, that in one of the *Buranjis* there is a reference to the arrival in the Burhā Gohāin's camp in 1791, of two native agents sent by some British official, who is called a captain, to report on the state of the country.

should be made to understand that he must try to pacify his rebellious subjects by adopting conciliatory measures; he also suggested that if, by the restoration of his ancestral rights, Krishna Nārāyan could be induced to submit, his troops with those already at Captain Welsh's disposal might prove sufficient to conduct the Raja to his capital.

Operations against Krishna Nārāyan.

Before this communication was received, Captain Welsh had become convinced that Krishna Nārāyan was trifling with him, and he determined to take vigorous measures to reduce him to obedience. Before daylight on the morning of the 6th December, 1792, he crossed the Brahmaputra with two hundred and eighty men, and landed near a small hill with a temple on it, presumably Asvakrānta, on and around which the enemy's troops, three thousand strong, were posted. The foot of the hill was reached without opposition, but at this point the enemy made several determined attempts to repel Welsh's small force. They were, however, unable to withstand the steady discipline and superior arms of the sepoys, and fled with the loss of twenty killed and forty wounded, besides several prisoners. Forty cannon mounted on the hill were also taken. On the British side, the only casualties were six men wounded.

Krishna Nārāyan rallied his men some distance from Gauhāti, and, towards the end of the month, he was reported to be ravaging the tract east of the Bar Nadi which now forms the Mangaldai sub-division. A detachment of three companies under Lieutenant Williams was promptly sent against him, and, after some manœuvring, engaged a band of five hundred *Barkāndāzes* at Khātikuchi. A hundred of them were killed or wounded, and the rest fled across the Bhutān frontier, which at this period extended into the plains as far as the Gosāin Kamala Ali. There is nothing to show when this encroachment on the part of the Bhutias began, but it was not formally recognized until Gaurināth's time.

Administrative reforms introduced by Captain Welsh.

The efforts which Welsh made to induce Gaurināth to conciliate his numerous enemies by acts of clemency were frustrated, not only by the vindictive disposition of the king himself, but also by the evil advice given to him by the Bar Barua and other ministers. It was discovered that, since the Raja's return to Gauhāti, no less than one hundred

and thirteen persons had been murdered, including twenty-four for whose good treatment Welsh himself had given special orders. Seventy others were found in prison dying from starvation. Strong measures were taken to put a stop to these and other atrocities. The Bar Barua and the Soladharā Phukan were placed under arrest; the dismissal of the Bar Phukan was insisted on; and the Raja himself was severely rebuked. The latter, far from showing any signs of contrition, accepted full responsibility for all the brutalities that had been committed, and declared that he would rather abdicate than forgo the power of killing and mutilating his subjects at will. He was therefore deprived temporarily of all authority, save over a hundred attendants who were placed at his disposal. A new Bar Phukan was appointed, and entrusted with the administration of Lower Assam. Two manifestoes were issued, one to the people of Assam, and the other to the chiefs and nobles. In the former, the people were informed that, in future, justice would be righteously administered, and certain days were appointed on which complaints would be heard and grievances redressed; in the latter the chiefs and nobles were invited to come to Gauhāti, and assist in concerting measures for ameliorating the condition of the country.

Gaurināth now became more tractable, and signed an agreement consenting to the following measures, *viz.*, the dismissal of the Bar Barua and other officials proved guilty of treachery or oppression; the proclamation of a general amnesty; the abolition of all punishments extending to death or mutilation, except after a regular trial; and the convocation of all the chiefs and nobles at Gauhāti for the purpose of framing measures for the re-establishment of the king's authority and the future good government of the country. The Bengal mercenaries in Gaurināth's employ were found to be oppressing the people and to be giving information of Welsh's movements to their friends in the Darrang Raja's camp. They were accordingly deported to Rangpur.

Krishna Nārāyan submits.

In May, Krishna Nārāyan was induced to march into Gauhāti with his remaining mercenaries, to the number of about four hundred. These were sent off under escort to

Rangpur, where they were given their arrears of pay, amounting to nearly six thousand rupees, while Krishna Nārāyan, after taking the customary oath of allegiance, was formally installed as Raja of Darrang. He refunded the amount given to his disbanded clubmen and agreed, though very reluctantly, to pay an annual tribute of fifty-eight thousand rupees in lieu of the feudal obligation to supply soldiers and labourers*; he also agreed that his position was to be that of a landholder and not of a ruling chief, and that the political and administrative control should rest in the Bar Phukan, as it had done in the time of his predecessor. When these arrangements had been completed, he proceeded to Mangaldai and took formal possession of his estate, accompanied by a guard of sepoys, which was furnished to him at his request.†

In the following September some of Krishna Nārāyan's mercenaries, who had fled into Bhutān, re-appeared, but they were easily dispersed by a small detachment sent against them. With this exception Darrang affairs gave no further trouble.

Halt at Gauhāti during rainy season.

In response to Welsh's request for reinforcements, six more companies of sepoys were sent up from Bengal, but they did not all arrive until the latter part of April, when the time for field operations was over. It was, therefore, decided to halt at Gauhāti for the rainy season, and to spend the interval in consolidating the Raja's position in Lower Assam and in restoring confidence. This task proved more difficult than had been anticipated. In spite of the promised amnesty, the chiefs and nobles showed no disposition to place themselves in the Raja's power, and it was suspected that some hostile influence was at work. It was discovered that the dismissed Bar Barua and Solādharā Phukan were still intriguing and causing mischief, and they were deported to Rangpur in Bengal. The removal of these malcontents was

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* This sum of Rs. 58,000 was made up as follows:—for Darrang, Rs. 50,000; for Chutiya Rs. 2,000; for Koliābar Rs. 3,000; in lieu of customs duty between Darrang and Bhutān, Rs. 3,000.

† Krishna Nārāyan also claimed the portion of Kāmrup which lies north of the Brahmaputra, but a similar claim was advanced by two other members of his family and the question was postponed for future decision.

productive of the best possible results. Soon afterwards the three great Gohāins signified their adherence to Captain Welsh, and their example was followed by most of the officials as well as by the feudatory chiefs.

Towards the end of October an advance-guard under Lieutenant Macgregor was sent up the river to Koliābar, and great exertions were made to send up supplies, with a view to making that place a base for the coming operations in Upper Assam. The pacification of Nowgong was also effected, and the banditti who infested the river and interrupted communications between Gauhāti and Goālpāra were suppressed.

Everything was now ready for the campaign against the Moāmariās, but Gaurināth was a confirmed opium eater and his long-continued excesses in the consumption of this drug had induced such a condition of physical lethargy and mental torpor that he could hardly be persuaded to leave Gauhāti. He was also, apparently, far from satisfied that Welsh, with such a small force, would be able to overcome the hosts which the Moāmariās could bring into the field.

Advance to Upper Assam.

At last a move was made and, in January, 1794, the whole expedition advanced to Koliābar. Gaurināth here sent for Captain Welsh and, after recounting his misfortunes, the evils inflicted on the people by his bad ministers, and the invaluable services rendered him by the British Government, declared that he possessed neither the ability nor inclination to transact business with his officers. He therefore begged him to concert the necessary measures with them. He also wrote to the Governor-General, begging that Captain Welsh might be permitted to employ the troops under his command in any way that might seem expedient to him and the ministers for the restoration of order, and undertaking to pay a sum of Rs. 3,00,000 annually for their maintenance. Of this sum half was to be collected by the Bar Phukan from the districts under his control, and the other half by the Bar Barua from the rest of the Ahom dominions. In consultation with the Bar Gohāin, the Barpātra Gohāin and the Solāl Gohāin, Captain Welsh appointed the Pāni Siliā Gohāin to be Bar Barua, while two princes who had escaped the general sentence of mutilation pronounced on the royal

family by Gaurināth, when he ascended the throne, were given the posts of Sāring Raja and Tipām Raja, respectively. A letter was despatched to the Moāmariā chiefs, calling on them to settle their differences with the Raja, and assuring them of their safety should they do so, but adding that, if they refused, the blame would rest on their own shoulders. It was afterwards ascertained that this letter never reached its destination, the bearer of it having been afraid, or unable, to pass through the outlying rebel forces.

Moāmariās defeated at Jorhāt.

Lieutenant Macgregor was again sent on ahead to reconnoitre and arrange to get supplies. He reached Debargāon on the 11th February and, on the 14th, paid a three days' visit to Jorhāt, to interview the Burhā Gohāin, who was still maintaining the unequal struggle against the insurgents. Shortly after his return to Debargāon, the Moāmariās, who had learnt of his visit to Jorhāt, appeared before that place in such numbers that the Burhā Gohāin sent him an urgent appeal for help. Although his force consisted of only forty-six men of all ranks he did not hesitate for a moment. As soon as he received the news, he sent off a Subadar and twenty men, who safely reached Jorhāt; and the next evening he followed them in person, accompanied by Ensign Wood, a havildar and fourteen men. A nāik and eight sepoys were left in charge of the boats. The small party marched all night and, early next morning, arrived in the vicinity of the Moāmariā camp. A detour to the right was made to avoid it, and then the two officers, impatient of the delay, left the sepoys to come on with the baggage and, pushing on through the jungle with a few servants and camp followers, reached Jorhāt about 8 A.M.*

* The reckless way in which these officers left their small guard and marched alone into Jorhāt shows the contempt they must have felt for the enemy.

The following incident shows this even more clearly:—While Macgregor was encamped at Koliābar he sent a nāik with four men to arrest Sinduri Hāzarika, the leader of the Moāmariās in Nowgong. The nāik returned without effecting his object, and reported that Sinduri was surrounded by one thousand armed men, who announced their determination to oppose his arrest. This explanation was held to be inadequate; and the nāik was court-martialled, and sentenced to reduction to the ranks for a month. It is only fair to add that Captain Welsh refused to confirm this sentence.

They found that the Moāmariās had advanced the same morning, and were at that moment quite close to Jorhāt. Without waiting for the rest of his force, Macgregor at once mustered the party of twenty men under the Subadar, who had arrived the previous day, and led them out in support of the Burhā Gohāin's troops. He had just drawn up his small force, with their right covered by an embankment, when he was attacked by a mob of two thousand Moāmariās, who came crowding on, confident of victory. The sepoys, although they received but little aid from the Burhā Gohāin's troops, behaved with great coolness; they obeyed the instructions of their two officers to fire singly and at separate objects, and inflicted such heavy losses upon the enemy, that the latter were soon in full retreat. No casualties were suffered by the little detachment. About 1 P.M., the same afternoon Lieutenant Macgregor was again attacked while reconnoitring, but soon routed his assailants. His loss was only four men wounded. The Moāmariās in the two engagements lost about eighty killed and wounded.

Rangpur captured.

News of these events reached Captain Welsh on the 23rd February. He at once set out with all his troops, except one company which was left at Koliābar to guard the stores, and reached Debargāon on the 8th March. From this place another letter was addressed to the Moāmariā leaders, but it, like the former one, was never delivered. When the advance was resumed, Lieutenant Irwin was sent ahead with two companies. He had reached a place about twelve miles from Rangpur when he was furiously attacked by a large number of men armed with matchlocks, spears and bows. He drove off his assailants and, pushing on, took up a strong position on a brick bridge over the Nāmdāng river, four or five miles from Rangpur. In this engagement he had two men killed and thirty-five wounded. The Moāmariās lost far more heavily, and their leader himself was seriously wounded.

Captain Welsh hastened to join the advance-guard and, on the 18th March, the whole party proceeded to Rangpur, which had just been evacuated by the enemy. Their flight was so sudden that they left behind them large quantities of grain, cattle and even treasure. The booty was sold, and

realized a sum of Rs. 1,17,334 which, with Gaurināth's approval, was distributed among the troops as prize money. This action afterwards brought down upon Captain Welsh a severe rebuke from the Governor-General.

Governor-General recalls the expedition.

Gaurināth, who had remained with the boats which were being brought up the Dikhu, reached Rangpur on the 21st March. On his arrival Captain Welsh held a grand durbar and, in the presence of the nobles, asked the Raja if he could now dispense with the help of British troops. The answer was an emphatic negative. The Raja and his ministers were unanimous in asserting that, if they were withdrawn, the country would inevitably return to a state of anarchy. Welsh, therefore, decided to complete the pacification of the Moāmariās. Before resorting to force, he made a fresh attempt to obtain a peaceful settlement, and he induced the Raja to write to the rebels promising them pardon if they would come in. Welsh himself guaranteed the fulfilment of this promise. He waited a month for an answer, but none was received, and it became clear that the Moāmariās would never submit until they were thoroughly beaten. On the 19th April, Welsh despatched three companies to attack their head-quarters at Bāgmāra near Rangpur, but it had not proceeded many miles when orders were received from Government prohibiting further offensive operations, and it was accordingly recalled to Rangpur.

Change of policy explained.

Sir John Shore had taken the place of Lord Cornwallis as Governor-General in December, 1793; and his accession marked a distinct change in the policy of the Government of India. Non-interference was the key-note of the new administration. The result, in Assam, was disastrous. Captain Welsh had succeeded admirably in the task assigned to him; and had not only shown himself a good organizer and a bold and determined leader, but had also displayed consummate tact and singular administrative ability. He had gained the confidence of all classes. He had dismissed the more oppressive and corrupt officials, and had secured the cordial co-operation of the others; while by a policy of conciliation and clemency, combined with firmness, he had procured the submission of the Darrang Raja and had induced the people generally to acquiesce in Gaurināth's

restoration. Gaurināth had several times written to Government expressing cordial appreciation of his services, and begging that he might be allowed to remain at least some time longer, and had offered to pay the whole of the expenses of the troops. This appeal was seconded by Welsh himself, who reported that, if the detachment were withdrawn, "confusion, devastation and massacre would ensue"; that the king left to himself would never keep the promises of pardon which he had been induced to make; that Krishna Nārāyan, fearing assassination, would either flee from the country or import more *barkandāzes;* that the obnoxious favourites would be recalled and would wreak their resentment on all who had cultivated the friendship of the English; and that the Moāmariās would soon break out again and once more expel the Raja from his capital. But the new Governor-General had already made up his mind; and, in spite of these representations, he issued the order above alluded to, directing Captain Welsh to abstain from all further active operations, and to return to British territory by the 1st July at the latest.

Final acts of expedition.

On the withdrawal of the troops sent against them, the Moāmariās returned to the neighbourhood of the Dikhu river and, emboldened by their immunity from attack, actually plundered some granaries within the environs of Rangpur. A second raid of the same kind was prevented by a timely alarm. In the face of this renewed activity of the insurgents, and of the danger to which, not only the king's followers, but the expedition itself, would be exposed unless something were done, Welsh determined to make a final effort to disperse them before starting on his journey back to Bengal. Accordingly, at 2 A.M. on the morning of May 5th he marched out against the rebels and drove them from their encampment. They retreated so rapidly that they escaped without much loss, and, taking up a fresh position on the right bank of the Darikā river, continued their guerilla tactics. Welsh, therefore, on the 12th May, crossed the Dikhu with all his available troops and marched against their new position. On this occasion, either because his advance was expected or because, having now a force of four thousand men, they felt more confident of success, they advanced

boldly to the attack, and greeted the oncoming sepoys with a storm of bullets and arrows. But their new-found courage soon oozed away; and, when they saw the troops continuing to advance, they broke and fled. They were hotly pursued and, in the end, were entirely dispersed with heavy loss. Their camp was burned, and the troops returned to Rangpur with only two casualties.

A few days later, in spite of the urgent entreaties of the Raja, Captain Welsh reluctantly left Rangpur on his downward voyage. He arrived at Gauhāti on the 30th May. Here he was overwhelmed with petitions, imploring him to remain, from all sorts and conditions of people whose interests would be ruined by the removal of the troops, and who had, in many cases, given their adhesion to Gaurināth on the understanding that Welsh would protect them from injustice or molestation. But the orders of the Governor-General were imperative, and, on the 3rd July, 1794, the expedition again reached British territory.

Mis-government ensues.

Many of Welsh's gloomy prognostications were quickly realized. As soon as the expedition was withdrawn, Gaurināth, despairing of holding Rangpur, proceeded with his chief nobles to Jorhāt, which now became the capital. He had barely left Rangpur when the Moāmariās, hearing of the departure of the British troops, collected their scattered forces and advanced against the town. The garrison fled to Jorhāt without making any attempt at resistance, and the place fell once more into the hands of the insurgents.

The officers and others who had been befriended or protected by Captain Welsh now became the victims of Gaurināth's vindictive spite. The Bar Barua, who had been appointed on that officer's nomination, was stripped of all his belongings and dismissed; the Bar Phukan was accused of disloyalty and barbarously murdered, and the Solāl Gohāin shared the same fate. The Bairāgi who had led the attack on Gauhāti was beheaded. All persons of the Moāmariā persuasion within the tract owning allegiance to the king were hunted down, robbed and tortured to death; and the brutalities to which they were subjected were so appalling that many committed suicide to avoid falling into the hands of their persecutors.

The greatest confusion ensued, and the grip of the central administration on the outlying provinces was seriously weakened. At Gauhāti a Bengali mercenary, named Hajāra Singh, held the post of Bar Phukan at his disposal. He sold it to one candidate for ten thousand rupees, and then supplanted him in favour of another, who bid sixty thousand rupees. The latter is reputed to have raised the wherewithal for payment by despoiling the Kāmākhyā, Hājo and other temples of their gold and silver utensils. Hajāra Singh was at length defeated and killed by some mercenaries brought up from Bengal.

Standing army created in Upper Assam.

Meanwhile, in Upper Assam, steps were being taken to form a standing army, modelled on the pattern of that maintained by the East India Company. It was recruited in the first instance from men who had served with credit in the Burhā Gohāin's operations against the Moāmariās. They were given a uniform, armed with flint-lock guns purchased in Calcutta, and drilled and disciplined by two of Captain Welsh's native officers, who had been induced by heavy bribes to remain in Assam.* With the aid of this force the king's officers were once more able to show a bold front to the Moāmariās and other internal enemies, and, but for the intervention of the Burmese, the downfall of the Ahom dynasty might have been considerably delayed.

Sadiya taken by the Khāmtis.

The Ahoms were not, however, able to retain their hold of Sadiya. In 1794 this place was taken by the Khāmtis, who had descended from the hills to the east some fifty or sixty years previously, and had established themselves, with the permission of the Ahom Raja, on the bank of the Tengapāni. They defeated a so-called Raja, who had been set up by some Doms of the Moāmariā sect, and reduced the local Assamese to slavery. Their chief arrogated to himself the title of Sadiya Khowā Gohāin.

Gaurināth Singh dies.

Gaurināth Singh did not long survive his restoration to power. In less than eighteen months after Captain Welsh's

* Previous to this time flint guns were not in use in Assam. There was, however, a plentiful supply of matchlocks. Captain Welsh found twenty thousand of these weapons at Gauhāti, but the officials had so neglected their duties that there were few who knew how to use them.

return to Bengal he was seized with a mortal illness, and, on the 19th December, 1794. his misspent life came to an end. The Burhā Gohāin, who was on the spot, concealed his death; and, on the pretence that the king had sent for the Bar Barua, induced that officer to come to the palace, where, still using the king's name, he caused him to be arrested and put to death. Having got rid of his most powerful rival, he announced Gaurināth's death and appointed as his successor Kinārām, a descendant of Gadādhar Singh who, he declared, had been nominated by Gaurināth himself on his death-bed.

His character.

Gaurināth was the most incompetent, blood-thirsty, disreputable and cowardly of all the Ahom kings. He was described by Captain Welsh as "a poor debilitated man, incapable of transacting business, always either washing or praying, and, when seen, intoxicated with opium." His vindictive treatment of the Moāmariās and other enemies has already been mentioned. But the stimulus of hatred or revenge was not needed to induce him to perpetrate the grossest barbarities; he would frequently do so from the sheer love of inflicting suffering on others, and he never moved out without a body of executioners ready to carry out his sanguinary orders. Many stories are told which reveal his cruel and brutal nature, but a single instance will suffice. One of his servants having inadvertently answered a question intended for another, he instantly caused him to be seized, his eyeballs to be extracted, and his ears and nose to be cut off. Gaurināth neglected entirely the duties of his kingly office, which he left to his intriguing and corrupt favourites. These were stigmatized by Captain Welsh as "a set of villains, all drawing different ways." It was probably the vices and excesses of the king and his parasites, quite as much as the physical and moral deterioration of the people, that led to the ignominious overthrow of his government by the Moāmariā rabble. The signal success of Captain Welsh's small force, ably handled though it was, clearly shows what contemptible foes the Moāmariās really were; and it is impossible to believe that the Ahoms, much as they may have degenerated, would have been unable to repel them, had they presented a united front, instead of being distracted by

jealousy and mutual distrust, and had not their loyalty been sapped by the brutal excesses of the inhuman monster, who called himself their king, and of his equally infamous ministers.

Condition of the people in his time.

During his reign the people, who had hitherto enjoyed a fair measure of happiness and prosperity, were plunged into the depths of misery and despair. Where the Moāmariās held sway, whole villages were destroyed, and the inhabitants, robbed of all their possessions, were forced to flee the country, or to eke out a precarious existence by eating wild fruits and roots and the flesh of unclean animals. The country between Dergāon and Rangpur, once so highly cultivated, was found desolate by Captain Welsh, and many large villages had been entirely deserted by their inhabitants.* In Lower Assam the Bengal mercenaries and gangs of marauding banditti who flocked into the province caused similar, though less widespread, havoc, while where Gaurināth himself had power, all persons belonging to the Moāmariā communion were subjected to all manner of persecutions and barbarities.

Welsh's description of the country.

Some interesting information regarding the condition of the country towards the close of the eighteenth century is contained in Captain Welsh's reports. At that time Gauhāti was an extensive and populous town. It was situated on both banks of the Brahmaputra and extended to the neighbouring hills. Along a portion of the river bank there was a rampart, on which were mounted one hundred and thirteen guns of different calibre, including three of European manufacture. The only other fortification of any kind was a large oblong enclosure, a hundred yards from the river, surrounded by a brick wall six feet in height, with a narrow wet ditch inside and out, and containing a thatched building, so large that the whole of the detachment found accommodation in it. Rangpur, which had been for many years the Ahom capital, was a large and thickly populated

* In his last letter to Sir John Shore begging for the retention of the British detachment, Gaurināth affirmed that the Moāmariās had destroyed "cows, Brāhmans, women and children" to the extent of one hundred thousand lives.

town, twenty miles in extent. In the centre was an enclosure, similar to that found at Gauhāti, but much out of repair. The surrounding country had been very highly cultivated. The nobles held large tracts of land, which were tilled by their slaves, but the produce was never brought to market, and it was all but impossible to buy grain. Salt and opium were found more serviceable than money as a means of procuring supplies.

At the sale of the loot taken at Rangpur, rice in the husk was sold at the rate of six hundred pounds per rupee, while buffaloes fetched five rupees, and cows two rupees, each.* In spite of these low prices and the consequent dearness of money, the resources of the country were such that Gaurināth was able to offer a large subsidy for the retention of the British troops.

The trade with Bengal was considerable, and the officials who farmed the customs revenue paid Rs. 90,000 a year to the Bar Phukan of which, however, only Rs. 26,000 reached the royal treasury. Before the disturbances the registered imports of salt from Bengal amounted to 120,000 maunds a year, or barely one-sixth of the quantity imported at the present day. At that time, however, a certain amount was produced locally, and some, no doubt, was smuggled past the custom house. The money price was three times as great as it is now, while, measured in paddy, it was more than forty times as great. It was thus quite beyond the means of the common people.

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* In a copper-plate deed of grant of 1661 Sak (1739 A.D.) the prices of various commodities are quoted, *viz.*, rice 2-1|5 annas per maund; milk, 2½ annas; gram, 4 annas; salt and oil, 4¾ annas; *gur*, 1¼ annas, and black pepper, Rs. 20 per maund. Betel leaf was sold at 40 bundles for an anna, earthen pots or *kalsis* at 643 per rupee and areca nuts at 5,120 per rupee. In other similar records of the same period, the price of rice is quoted at 4 annas per maund; *gur*, Rs. 2½; matikalai, 5 annas; pulse and *ghi*, 10 annas, and oil, Rs. 3-1|3 per maund. Elsewhere again rice is priced at 8 annas and matikalai at 10 annas per maund; earthen pots at a rupee for 224 and betel leaf at an anna for 20 bundles of 20 leaves each. Amongst other articles of which prices are given may be mentioned goats, Re. 1 each; ducks, 1 anna each; pigeons, 1 pice; *dhutis*, 5 annas, and *gāmchas*, 6 pice each. The price of salt appears to have ranged from 5 to 10 rupees per maund; it stood at the latter figure in Captain Welsh's time.

Kamalesvar Singh, 1795 to 1810.

On ascending the throne, Kinārām took the Hindu name Kamalesvar, and the Ahom name Suklingphā. He appointed his father to the post of Sāring Raja. He left the government of the country in the hands of the Burhā Gohāin who had raised him to the throne. This was fortunate, as the officer in question was by far the most capable and energetic noble in the country. In the previous reign, although deserted by the king and unaided, if not intrigued against, by the other nobles he had steadfastly set himself to resist the advance of the Moāmariā rebels, and had for years held his own against their repeated attacks. Now that there was a king who was willing to support him, he made a clean sweep of the officials who were opposed to him, and, having done so, devoted all his efforts to the restoration of order throughout the country. With this object the system of maintaining a disciplined body of troops, which had been introduced at the close of the last reign, was continued and extended. In the depleted state of the treasury, it was found difficult to provide funds to pay the wages of the sepoys. The *Adhikars*, or spiritual heads of the *Sattras*, were, therefore, called upon to assist by contributing sums, ranging from four thousand rupees downwards, according to their means.

Abortive insurrection in Kāmrup.

Soon after Kamalesvar's accession a serious rising was reported from Kāmrup. Two brothers named Har Datta and Bir Datta, with the secret aid, it is said, of the Rajas of Koch Bihār and Bijni, who hoped through them to recover Kāmrup for one of their race, raised a band of Kachāris and of Punjābi and Hindustani refugees and declared themselves independent. Large numbers flocked to their standard, and nearly the whole of North Kāmrup fell into their hands, while according to some they also occupied part of the south bank. They were nicknamed Dumdumiyas. Mr. Raush of Goālpāra was caught and killed by a band of these rebels, while on a trading expedition to Darrang, and his boats were plundered.*

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* According to another account Mr. Raush was murdered by the Darrang Raja, whom he had visited in the hope of obtaining compensation for property destroyed at Gauhāti.

The Bar Phukan was unable to obtain help from Upper Assam where, as will shortly be seen, the Burhā Gohāin was already fully employed. He, therefore, raised a force of Hindustanis, and with these, and some local levies obtained from the Rajas of Beltolā and Dimarua, he crossed the Brahmaputra and attacked and defeated the rebels in several engagements. Har Datta and his brother fled, but were eventually caught and put to a painful death. Their fall was due largely to their own overbearing conduct, which had alienated the people of the better class, who preferred to be ruled by foreigners rather than by arrogant upstarts from their own ranks. For his successful conduct of these operations the Bar Phukan was rewarded with the title Pratāp Ballabh.

Insurrection of Daflas and Moāmariās.

In the same year a mixed body of Daflas and Moāmariās raised the standard of revolt on the north bank of the Brahmaputra.* They crossed the river to Silghāt, but at this place they were met and defeated by the newly-raised army of regulars. Many of them were killed, and others were drowned while trying to get into their boats. Many also were captured and beheaded, and their heads were stuck up on stakes as a warning to others.

The Burhā Gohāin was unable at the time to continue the pursuit across the river, as he was still engaged in restoring order on the south bank, and in renovating the town of Rangpur, which had been much damaged during the long civil war. But as soon as he was free, he crossed to the north bank, near the present town of Tezpur, and very soon reduced the Daflas to submission. He proceeded to Gorāmur where he defeated several rebel bands, capturing and putting to death Phophāi Senapati and other leaders. He next marched to the mouth of the Kherketia Suti, and thence to Singaluguri, where a number of Moāmariā refugees had collected. These also he defeated. Their

* At this period the Daflas had taken to interfering very considerably in public affairs in Assam. During Captain Welsh's expedition their leading men had an interview at Koliābar with Lieutenant Macgregor, who stated that they had ranged themselves on the side of the Bar Gohāin. He described them as "men of excellent understanding and pleasant manners."

Mahanta, Pitāmbar, was captured and put to death, but another leader, known as Bharathi Raja, escaped; this man is probably identical with the Bharath Singh whom the Moāmariās installed at Rangpur in 1791. A great quantity of booty was taken, and many prisoners, who were deported to Khutiapota.

In 1799 there was a fresh outbreak of the Moāmariās at Bengmāra, headed by Bharathi Raja. An expedition was sent against them and they were put to flight. Their leader was shot early in the action. These successive defeats appear to have convinced the Moāmariās of the hopelessness of further resistance, and for several years no further trouble was given by them in Eastern Assam.

Operations against Singphos and Khāmtis.

The Singphos remained to be reckoned with, and also the Khāmtis, who had established themselves at Sadiya during the recent period of anarchy. The former were attacked and put to flight in 1798, while the latter were defeated in 1800, with the loss of many killed, including their Burhā Raja, and numerous prisoners. The prisoners were taken to Rangpur and settled, some on the Desoi river north of Jorhat and some at Titābar. It is said that in this battle the Khāmtis were aided by other Shān tribes, such as Narās and Phakiāls, and also by the Abors, at whose hands they had some time previously suffered a defeat, in the course of hostilities arising from the kidnapping, by them, of certain Miris owning allegiance to the Abors. After their defeat by the Ahoms, the Khāmtis seem to have disappeared for a time; and they did not again become paramount in Sadiya until the final collapse of the Ahom power in the reign of Chandrakānt.

Burhā Gohāin brings back fugitive cultivators.

All this time the Burhā Gohāin had been making constant efforts to induce fugitive cultivators to return to their homes. He offered a free pardon to those who had fought on the side of the rebels, and many such persons came back, but a number of Moāmariās, who had taken refuge in Kachāri and Jaintia territory, preferred to remain where they were rather than place themselves in the power of their old enemy. This led to a long correspondence with the Kachāri and Jaintia Rajas, who both declined to drive away their new subjects. The Jaintia controversy appears to have

terminated with the ignominious expulsion of an envoy from Rām Singh, the Jaintia Raja, because the letters which he brought were thought to be discourteous, and did not contain the adulatory epithets customary in the intercourse between oriental rulers.

Hostilities with Moāmariās and Kachāris in Nowgong

The dispute with the Kachāri king, Krishna Chandra, came to a head in 1803, when a force was despatched to recover the fugitives, most of whom appear to have settled in the tract of level country round Dharampur, between the Mikir Hills and the Jamuna river. The expedition assembled at Rahā and advanced to Jamunamukh, where it beat back a combined force of Kachāris and Moāmariās. The enemy afterwards rallied, and took to raiding and burning villages near Nowgong town. Then, being strengthened by numerous fresh accessions to their ranks, they ventured on a second engagement, and gained a complete victory over the Ahom troops, who retreated to Gauhāti with the loss of five hundred and forty men killed besides many wounded and prisoners.

On hearing of this reverse, the Burhā Gohāin called in the troops stationed in the eastern districts and sent them with fresh levies to renew the conflict. The Moāmariās were now in their turn put to flight in a battle near Nowgong, and fled down the Kallang to Rahā. The Ahom force, after driving them from Rahā, ascended the Kopili to its junction with the Jamuna, and proceeded thence up the Jamuna to Doboka, where it sacked and destroyed all the hostile villages. At this stage, disputes broke out between the Moāmariās and their Kachāri allies. Some of the latter deserted to the Ahom camp, and were given land in the neighbourhood of Bebejia.

There was now a short lull in the hostilities, but they were renewed in 1805, when a signal defeat was inflicted on the Moāmariās and Kachāris. Great numbers were killed, and the survivors lost heart and dispersed, some returning to their old homes and others fleeing to Khāspur and the Jaintia parganas.

Moāmaria rising in the east.

In the same year there was a fresh rising of the Morān Moāmariās east of the Dibru river, whose chief, Sarbānanda Singh, had established himself at Bengmarā. They were defeated at Bahatiāting, and beat a hasty retreat to

Solongaguri. They suffered great hardships during the rainy season, and many died of fever and dysentery. They then made their submission, and were settled at Ghilamāra, a guard being placed there to keep them in order. While this rising was in progress the Moāmariās had sent a person, called Rāmnāth Bar Barua, to invoke the aid of the Burmese monarch. This was not at first granted, but, in response to fresh appeals, parties of Burmese were twice brought into the country. On both occasions, however, they were won over by the agents of the watchful Burhā Gohāin. In the end the latter relaxed his severity towards this section of the Moāmariās and gave the title of Bar Senapati to their chief, who, on his part, seems to have fulfilled his obligations and to have collected and paid over the revenue from the people acknowledging his authority.

Darrang affairs.

About this time Krishna Nārāyan, the Darrang Raja, having fallen into disfavour, was superseded by his relative Samudra Nārāyan. The latter was strictly enjoined to do his utmost to recover fugitives and settle them in their old villages, a matter in which Krishna Nārāyan appears to have been somewhat remiss. He was also told to prevent the Bhutias from encroaching. As the Bhutia authorities had shortly before complained of encroachments beyond the Kamalā Ali, which they claimed as the boundary, and had been put off with an evasive answer, it would seem that the intention was to win back the tract of country which the Bhutias had seized during the disturbances of the previous reigns, and that the so-called raids were merely efforts on the part of the Bhutias to maintain their hold on it.

Peace restored.

The vigour which the Burhā Gohāin had displayed in dispersing all rebel forces and inflicting condign punishment on the disaffected, coupled with the toleration he showed for those who made their submission, now began to bear fruit. For the remaining years of this reign, the country enjoyed profound peace, and nothing worthy of record occurred.

King dies. General features of his reign.

In 1810 there was a bad epidemic of small-pox. Kamalesvar caught the infection and succumbed to the disease. During his reign, which lasted for fifteen and a half years, the power of the Moāmariās was broken, order was restored, and the people again became fairly prosperous.

The credit, however, was due, not to Kamalesvar, but to his able and energetic Burhā Gohāin, in whose hands he was a mere puppet. It was, as we have seen, this officer who alone upheld the Ahom cause during Gaurināth's disgraceful reign, and it was he who, after Captain Welsh's departure, conceived and carried out the idea of maintaining a properly disciplined standing army in the place of the old system of calling out the villagers to act as soldiers. It was he again who led the new troops in their earlier engagements and who supervised the operations in their subsequent campaigns. Nor was it only in the field that he distinguished himself. His success in restoring peace and quiet was almost equally attributable to his lenient treatment of the rebels who made their submission and to his wise and equitable system of administration. He restored Rangpur to something like its former condition, and did much to improve the new town at Jorhāt. The Bhogdai was excavated in order to provide this town with a better water-supply, and its communications were improved by the construction of a road connecting it with Basā.*

The Burhā Gohāin nominated Chandrakānt, the brother of the late king, as his successor on the throne. He assumed **Chandrakānt, 1810 to 1818.**

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* This eulogy on the Burhā Gohāin is based on the detailed account of his operations against the Moāmariās contained in the *Buranjis*, and is written advisedly, in spite of Captain Welsh's statement that "the Burhā Gohāin may with great justice be suspected of having favoured the insurrection." There is nothing whatever in the native accounts of this period that in any way supports this accusation, which was probably grounded on secret allegations made by other rival ministers, who had access to Captain Welsh from the beginning, whereas he did not meet the Burhā Gohāin till towards the end of the expedition. Welsh himself describes these ministers as unscrupulous intriguers. The evidence of such persons, who had themselves abandoned the contest, cannot be accepted as throwing any slur on an officer who, alone, for many years before Welsh came to Assam, had kept the Moāmariās in check, and who continued to do so after he had again departed. It may be added that, when Lieutenant Macgregor went on ahead of the main force to arrange for its commissariat, he reported that the Burhā Gohāin gave him every assistance in his power. Colonel Hannay also supports this view. In his *Notes on the Moāmariās* he says: "Purnānund (*i.e.* the Burhā) Gohāin may be said to have been the protector and regenerator of his country for a period of twenty years."

the Ahom name Sudinphā. Being still a boy he was unable to take much part in the government of the country, and the control still remained with the Burhā Gohāin.

Proposal to accept British supremacy.

In order to prevent fresh internal dissensions the Bar Phukan proposed that the country should follow the example of Koch Bihār, and become tributary to the British Government. The Burhā Gohāin discussed this proposal with the other nobles, but it was rejected, as it was thought that it would be very unpopular with the people.

Intrigues at the Capital.

As Chandrakānt grew up, he began to fret at the Burhā Gohāin's influence, and struck up a great friendship with a youth of his own age named Satrām, the son of an Ahom soothsayer. He would often listen to this lad's advice in preference to that of his nobles, and at last took to receiving them in audience with Satrām seated at his side. They protested, but in vain, and things rapidly went from bad to worse. Satrām became more and more insolent in his dealings with them, and at last, thinking to obtain the supreme power for himself, he sought to procure the assassination of the Burhā Gohāin. Like most such plots, it was discovered in time. The Burhā Gohāin arrested all the conspirators and put them to death, except Satrām, who fled for protection to the king. The Burhā Gohāin insisted on his surrender, and the king at last reluctantly gave him up, after stipulating that his life should be spared. The young upstart was banished to Nāmrup, where he was soon afterwards killed by some Nāgas. It was believed by many that the king himself was privy to Satrām's conspiracy. Others averred that Satrām was murdered at the instigation of the Burhā Gohāin.

A new Bar Phukan gives trouble.

Meanwhile the Bar Phukan died, and one Badan Chandra was chosen as his successor. This appointment was a most disastrous one, and was destined to involve the country in even greater troubles than those from which it had only recently emerged. Before long, reports began to come in of his oppressive behaviour and gross exactions, while the conduct of his sons was even more outrageous. One of their favourite pranks was to make an elephant intoxicated with *bhāng*, and let it loose in Gauhāti, while they followed at a safe distance, and roared with laughter

as the brute demolished houses and killed the people who were unlucky enough to come in its way.

At last things reached such a pass that the Burhā Gohāin determined on Badan Chandra's removal. This decision was strengthened, it is said, by the suspicion that he had favoured Satrām's conspiracy.* Men were sent to arrest him, but, being warned in time by his daughter, who had married the Burnā Gohāin's son, he escaped to Bengal. He proceeded to Calcutta, and alleging that the Burhā Gohāin was subverting the Government and ruining the country, endeavoured to persuade the Governor-General to despatch an expedition against him. The latter, however, refused to interfere in any way.

And causes a Burmese invasion.

Meanwhile Badan Chandra had struck up a friendship with the Calcutta Agent of the Burmese Government, and, having failed in his endeavour to obtain the intervention of the British, he went with this man to the Court of Amarapura, where he was accorded an interview with the Burmese king. He repeated his misrepresentations regarding the conduct of the Burhā Gohāin, alleging that he had usurped the king's authority, and that owing to his misgovernment, the lives of all, both high and low, were in danger. At last he obtained a promise of help. Towards the end of the year 1816 an army of about eight thousand men was despatched from Burma. It was joined *en route* by the chiefs of Mungkong, Hukong and Manipur, and, by the time Nāmrup was reached, its numbers had swollen to about sixteen thousand. The Burhā Gohāin sent an army to oppose the invaders. A battle was fought at Ghilādhāri in which the Burmese were victorious. At this juncture the Burhā Gohāin died or, as some say, committed suicide by swallowing diamonds. His death was a great blow to the Ahom cause. He had proved his capacity in many a battle, and the whole nation had confidence in him. His eldest son, who was appointed to succeed him, was untried, and there was no other leader of proved ability. In spite of

* In Wilson's *Narrative of the Burmese War* this is assigned as the sole reason for his falling into bad odour with the Burhā Gohāin, but the *Buranjis* clearly show that this was not the case.

this, it was decided to continue the war; and a fresh army was hastily equipped and sent to resist the Burmese. Like the former one, it was utterly defeated, near Kathālbāri, east of the Dihing. The Burmese continued their advance, pillaging and burning the villages along their line of march. The new Burhā Gohāin endeavoured in vain to induce the king to retreat to Lower Assam, and then, perceiving that the latter intended to sacrifice him, in order to conciliate the Bar Phukan and his Burmese allies, fled westwards to Gauhāti.

The Burmese now occupied Jorhāt; and the Bar Phukan, who was formally reinstated, became all powerful. He retained Chandrakānt as the nominal king, but relentlessly set himself to plunder and slay all the relations and adherents of the Burhā Gohāin. The Burmese were paid a large indemnity for the trouble and expense of the expedition, and, in April 1817, returned to their own country, taking with them for the royal harem a girl who had been palmed off on them as a daughter of the Ahom king.

Fresh intrigues after departure of the Burmese.

Soon after their departure, the Bar Barua quarrelled with the Bar Phukan. The king's mother and some of the nobles sided with the former, and, at their instigation, a foreign subadar, named Rup Singh, assassinated the Bar Phukan. Messengers were at once sent to the Burhā Gohāin at Gauhāti, informing him of the Bar Phukan's death and inviting him to return to Jorhāt. But he was unable to forgive Chandrakānt for having thrown him over when the Burmese invaded the country, and accordingly invited Brajanāth, a great grandson of Raja Rājesvar Singh, who was residing at Silmāri, to become a candidate for the throne. Brajanāth agreed, and joined the Burhā Gohāin, who advanced upon Jorhāt with a force of Hindustani mercenaries and local levies. Chandrakānt fled to Rangpur, leaving the Dekā Phukan in charge at Jorhāt. The latter was killed, and the Burhā Gohāin entered Jorhāt. This was in February 1818.

Purandar Singh, 1818 to 1819.

Brajanāth at once caused coins to be struck in his own name, but it was now remembered that he was ineligible for the throne, as he had suffered mutilation; and his son Purandar Singh was therefore made king instead of him.

Chandrakānt was seized, and his right ear was slit in order to disqualify him from again sitting on the throne.

The friends of the murdered Bar Phukan fled to Burma and informed the king of that country of the course of events in Assam. A fresh force was despatched under a general named Ala Mingi (or Kio Mingi as Robinson calls him) and reached Assam in February 1819.* The Ahoms opposed it at Nāzira with some spirit, but, at a critical point in the engagement, their commander lost his nerve. They were defeated and beat a hasty retreat to Jorhāt. Purandar Singh fled at once to Gauhāti, and Chandrakānt, who joined the Burmese at Jāgpur, was formally reinstated.

Burmese rule, 1819 to 1824.

Chandrakānt, however, was now only a nominal ruler, and the real authority was vested in the Burmese commanders, who set themselves to hunt down all the adherents of the Burhā Gohāin that still remained in Upper Assam. Amongst others they captured and put to death the Burhā Gohāin and the Bar Barua. They sent a body of troops to Gauhāti to capture Purandar Singh, but he escaped to Silmāri in the British district of Rangpur, where he more than once solicited the assistance of the East India Company. He offered to pay a tribute of three lakhs of rupees a year, and also to defray all the expenses of the troops that might be deputed to restore him to the throne of his ancestors. The Burhā Gohāin had determined to defend Gauhāti, but the Burmese advanced in great strength, and his troops, fearing to face them, quietly dispersed. He was thus obliged to seek an asylum across the frontier. He proceeded to Calcutta, where he presented several memorials of the same purport as those already submitted by his nominal master. To all these applications the Governor-General replied that the British Government was not accustomed to interfere in the internal affairs of foreign states. Meanwhile

* This is the date given in the *Buranjis*. Wilson places Ala Mingi's arrival "early in 1818," but in this he is contradicted, not only by the *Buranjis*, but also by the narrative of events in Assam given in a Despatch dated the 12th September, 1823 from the Supreme Government to the Court of Directors, paragraph 91. Two coins struck in his own name by Purandar Singh's father Brajanāth also corroborate the chronology of the *Buranjis*.

Chandrakānt and the Burmese were making repeated applications for the extradition of the fugitives, but to these requests also a deaf ear was turned.

Chandrakānt quarrels with the Burmese.

The Burmese had appointed in the place of the late Bar Barua a Kachāri named Patal, but he soon incurred their displeasure, whereupon they summarily put him to death, without even the pretence of obtaining the approval of their puppet Chandrakānt. The latter became anxious about his own safety and, in April 1821, fled, first to Gauhāti and then to British territory. The Burmese endeavoured, by professions of friendship, to induce him to return, but he could not be persuaded to place himself in their power. In revenge for his mistrust they put a great number of his followers to death, and he retaliated on the Burmese officers who had been sent to invite him back. The breach now became final; another prince named Jogesvar was set up by the Burmese, and their grip on the country became firmer and firmer.*

The only part of the old Ahom kingdom which escaped the Burmese domination was the tract between the Buri Dihing and the Brahmaputra, where the Moāmariās, under the leader whom they called the Bar Senapati, maintained a precarious independence.

Chandrakānt tries to oust the Burmese.

The Burmese troops and their followers were so numerous that it was found impossible to provide them with supplies in any one place. They were, therefore, distributed about the country in a number of small detachments, and Chandrakānt, seeing his opportunity, collected some troops, regained possession of Gauhāti, and advanced up-stream. The Burmese, warned in time, mobilized their forces in Upper Assam, and then marched to meet Chandrakānt. Their army was arranged in three divisions, one of which marched down the south bank and another down the north, while a third proceeded in boats. Chandrakānt with his weak force was unable to resist them, and fled again to

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* Two very rough coins believed to have been struck by the Burmese are figured in Stapleton's paper on the *History and Ethnography of N. E. India* (J. A. S. B., 1910, p. 164). They are locally known as *Gāhuri Muhur* (pig coins).

Bengal. The Burmese took the opportunity to reduce the Darrang Raja to submission, and then returned to Upper Assam, plundering all the villages along their line of march. This was in 1820.

Fresh attempts by Chandrakānt and Purandar Singh.

In the following year Chandrakānt collected another force of about two thousand men, chiefly Sikhs and Hindustanis, and again entered his old dominions. The Burmese garrison, which had now been considerably reduced, was unable to resist him and he re-established his authority over the western part of the country.

For more than a year Purandar Singh had been busy collecting a force in the Duārs, which then belonged to Bhutān, with the aid of a Mr. Robert Bruce,* who had long been resident at Jogighopa, and who, with the permission of the Company's officers, procured for him a supply of firearms and ammunition from Calcutta. Towards the end of May 1821, this force, with Mr. Bruce in command, entered the country from the Eastern Duārs, but it was at once attacked and defeated by Chandrakānt's levies. Mr. Bruce was taken prisoner, but was released on his agreeing to enter the victor's service. In September, Chandrakānt sustained a defeat at the hands of the Burmese and retreated across the border. He rallied his men in the Goālpāra district, and Mr. Bruce obtained for him three hundred muskets and nine maunds of ammunition from Calcutta. He returned to the attack and, after inflicting several defeats on the Burmese, re-occupied Gauhāti in January 1822.

At the same time the Burmese forces on the north bank of the Brahmaputra were harassed by repeated incursions on the part of Purandar Singh's troops, which had rallied in Bhutān territory after their recent defeat. The Burmese commander sent a long letter to the Governor-General, protesting against the facilities which had been accorded to the Ahom princes and demanding their

* Mr. Robert Bruce is described in a despatch to the Court of Directors dated the 12th September, 1823, as a native of India, but this seems doubtful. His brother is known to have come from England in 1809, and he himself is referred to as a Major in a report by Dr. Wallich in 1835.

extradition, but nothing came of it, beyond the temporary incarceration of the Burhā Gohāin as a punishment for intercepting and delaying the delivery of the letter.

Chandrakānt's success was not of long duration. In the spring of 1822 Mingi Mahā Bandula, who afterwards commanded the Burmese forces in Arakan, arrived from Ava with large reinforcements, and in June a battle took place at Māhgarh. Chandrakānt is said to have displayed great personal bravery, and for some time his troops held their own, but in the end their ammunition gave out and they were defeated with a loss of fifteen hundred men.

Friction between Burmese and British.

Chandrakānt escaped once more across the border. The Burmese commander sent an insolent message to the British Officer commanding at Goālpāra warning him that, if protection were afforded to the fugitive, a Burmese army of 18,000 men, commanded by forty Rajas, would invade the Company's territories and arrest him wherever he might be found. This demonstration was answered by the despatch to the frontier of additional troops from Dacca, and by the intimation that any advance on the part of the Burmese would be at their certain peril. At the same time orders were sent to David Scott, the Magistrate of Rangpur, that, should Chandrakānt, or any of his party, appear in that district, they were to be disarmed and removed to a safe distance from the border. These orders do not seem to have been very effective, as soon afterwards the officer in charge of the district reported that he had been unable to ascertain whether Chandrakānt had actually taken shelter there or not. His ignorance was apparently due to the corruption of his native subordinates, who had been heavily bribed. Even the British Officer commanding at Goālpāra had been offered a sum of twenty-one thousand rupees as an inducement to him to permit of the raising of troops in that district.

Deplorable condition of the people under the Burmese.

Notwithstanding the warning that had been given them, various small parties of Burmese crossed the Goālpāra frontier and plundered and burnt several villages in the Hābrāghāt pargana. The Burmese commander disavowed these proceedings, but no redress was ever obtained for them.

The oppressions of the Burmese became more and more unbearable, and no one could be sure of his wealth or reputation, or even of his life. Not only did they rob everyone who had anything worth taking, but they wantonly burnt down villages, and even temples, violated the chastity of women, old and young alike, and put large numbers of innocent persons to death. In his *Travels and Adventures in the Province of Assam* (London, 1855) Major J. Butler says that, in revenge for the opposition offered to their army at Gauhāti, the Burmese slaughtered a vast number of men, women and children. At Chotopotong:—

> "Fifty men were decapitated in one day. A large building was then erected of bamboos and grass, with a raised bamboo platform; into this building were thrust men, children and poor innocent women with infants, and a large quantity of fuel having been placed round the building it was ignited: in a few minutes—it is said by witnesses of the scene now living— two hundred persons were consumed in the flames.......Many individuals who escaped from these massacres have assured me that innumerable horrible acts of torture and barbarity were resorted to on that memorable day by these inhuman savages.
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> "All who were suspected of being inimical to the reign of terror were seized and bound by Burmese executioners, who cut off the lobes of the poor victims' ears and choice portions of the body, such as the points of the shoulders, and actually ate the raw flesh before the living sufferers: they then inhumanly inflicted with a sword, deep but not mortal gashes on the body, that the mutilated might die slowly, and finally closed the tragedy by disembowelling the wretched victims. Other diabolical acts of cruelty practised by these monsters have been detailed to me by persons now living with a minuteness which leaves no doubt of the authenticity of the facts; but they are so shocking that I cannot describe them."

To make matters worse, bands of native marauders wandered about the country disguised as Burmese, and the

depredations committed by them were even worse than those of the invaders themselves. The hill tribes followed suit, and the sufferings of the hapless inhabitants were unspeakable. Many fled to the hills, and to Jaintia, Manipur and other countries,* while others embarked on a guerilla warfare and set themselves to cut off stragglers and small bodies of troops. The chief resistance was on the north bank, where the aid of the Akas and Daflas was enlisted, but the Burmese appeared in overwhelming force and crushed out all attempts at active opposition.

The Burmese at last induced Chandrakānt to believe that they had never meant to injure him, and had only set up Jogesvar because he refused to obey their summons to return. He went back but, on reaching Jorhāt, he was seized and placed in confinement at Rangpur. About this time, owing to sickness and the great scarcity of provisions, Mingi Mahā Bandula returned to Burma with the bulk of his army, and a new governor was appointed to Assam, who soon brought about a marked improvement in the treatment of the inhabitants. Rapine and pillage were put a stop to, and no punishment was inflicted without a cause. Officers were again appointed to govern the country; a settled administration was established, and regular taxation took the place of unlimited extortion. The sands, however, had run out; and the Burmese were now to pay for their past oppression of the hapless Assamese, and for the insults which they had levelled at the British authorities on this frontier and elsewhere, especially in the direction of Chittagong, by the loss of the dominions which they had so easily conquered, and of which, for the moment, they seemed to have obtained undisputed possession. But before narrating their expulsion from the Province which they had well-nigh ruined, it is necessary to give some account of the Ahom state organization, and also a brief summary of the history of the Kachāri, Jaintia, and Manipuri kings and of the district of Sylhet which now forms part of Assam.

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* For the relief of the refugees in British territory a large estate was acquired at Singamāri in the Rangpur district, where they were provided with land for cultivation.

CHAPTER IX.

THE AHOM SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT.

Form of government.

THE form of government amongst the Ahoms was somewhat peculiar. The king was at the head of the administration, but he was assisted by three great councillors of State, called Gohāins. The latter had provinces assigned to them, in which they exercised most of the independent rights of sovereignty, but, so far as the general administration of the State and its relations with other powers were concerned, their functions were merely advisory. They had, in this respect, no independent authority, but, in theory, the king was bound to consult them on all important matters, and was not permitted to issue any general orders, embark on war, or engage in negotiations with other states until he had done so. Neither was he considered to have been legally enthroned unless they had concurred in proclaiming him as king. The extent to which these rules of the constitution were observed varied with the personal influence and character of the king, on the one side, and of the great nobles, on the other. Some kings, such as Pratāp Singh, Gadādhar Singh and Rudra Singh appear to have followed their own wishes without much regard for the opinions of their nobles, while others, like Sudaiphā, Larā Raja and Kamalesvar Singh, were mere puppets in the hands of one or other of the great ministers of State. It has been said that the Gohāins had the right to depose a monarch of proved incapacity, but this is doubtful; and although there are several cases, such as those of Surāmphā and Sutyinphā, where the Gohāins took common action to eject unpopular rulers, there are more where their dethronement or assassination was the work of a single Gohāin or other noble, acting independently, and making no pretence to legality. The probability is that all such acts were equally unconstitutional.

Rules of succession to the throne.

In the early days of Ahom rule the succession devolved from father to son with great regularity, but in later times this rule was often departed from. Sometimes brothers took precedence of sons, as in the case of the four sons of

Rudra Singh, who each became king in turn, in conformity, it is said, with the death-bed injunction of that monarch. At other times cousins, and even more distant connections, obtained the throne, to the exclusion of nearer relatives, but in such cases the circumstances were generally exceptional. Much depended on the wish, expressed or implied, of the previous ruler; much on the personal influence of the respective candidates for the throne; and much on the relations which existed between the chief nobles who, in theory at least, had the right to make the selection.

Where the procedure was constitutional, and the new king was nominated by the great nobles acting in unison, they never passed over near relatives in favour of more distant kinsmen, except in cases where the former were admittedly unfit, or where, owing to the deposition of the previous king, it was thought desirable that his successor should not be too nearly related to him. But where one of these nobles obtained such a preponderance that he was able to proceed independently, and actually did so, the choice often depended more on his own private interest than on the unwritten law of the constitution; and he would usually select some one who, from his character or personal relations, or from the circumstances of his elevation to the throne, might be expected to support him, or to allow him to arrogate to himself much of the power which really belonged to the kingly office. Thus one of the Bar Baruas raised to the throne in turn Suhung and Gobar, neither of whom was nearly related to the previous ruler; Sujinphā and Sudaiphā owed their elevation to a Burhā Gohāin; Sulikphā to a Bar Phukan, and so on.

There was, however, one absolutely essential qualification; no one could under any circumstances ascend the throne unless he were a prince of the blood. The person of the monarch, moreover, was sacred, and any noticeable scar or blemish, even the scar of a carbuncle, operated as a bar to the succession. Hence arose the practice, often followed by Ahom kings, of endeavouring to secure themselves against intrigues and rebellions by mutilating all possible rivals. The desired object was usually effected by slitting the ear, but, as we have seen, less humane methods were also, at

times, adopted, and many unfortunate princes were deprived of their eyesight or put to death.

The ceremony of installation. The ceremony of installation was a very elaborate one. The king, wearing the *Somdeo,* or image of his tutelary deity, and carrying in his hand the *Hengdān* or ancestral sword, proceeded on a male elephant to Charāideo,* where he planted a *pipal* tree (*ficus religiosa*). He next entered the *Pātghar,* where the presiding priest poured a libation of water over him and his chief queen, after which the royal couple took their seats in the *Solongghar,* on a bamboo platform, under which were placed a man and a specimen of every procurable animal. Consecrated water was poured over the royal couple and fell on the animals below. Then, having been bathed, they entered the *Singarighar* and took their seats on a throne of gold, and the leading nobles came up and offered their presents. New money was coined, and gratuities were given to the principal officers of State and to religious mendicants. In the evening, there was a splendid entertainment at which the king presided. During the next thirty days the various tributary Rajas and State officials who had not been present at the installation were expected to come in and do homage and tender their presents to the new king. Before the reign of Rudra Singh, it had been the custom for the new king, before entering the *Singarighar,* to kill a man with his ancestral sword, but that monarch caused a buffalo to be substituted, and the example thus set was followed by all his successors.

The Gohāins. Just as the kingly office was the monopoly of a particular family or clan, so also was that of each of the Gohāins. In practice these appointments ordinarily descended from father to son, but the king had the right to select any member of the prescribed clan that he chose, and he could also, if he wished, dismiss a Gohāin. There were originally only two of these great officers, the Bar Gohāin

* As stated elsewhere Charāideo was founded in 1253 A.D. by Sukāphā, the first Ahom king. Although the capital was subsequently removed to various other places, Charāideo remained, as Wade puts it, "the seat and centre of the ancient worship of the Assamese conquerors" (Geographical Sketch of Assam, *Annual Asiatic Register,* 1805).

and the Burhā Gohāin, but in the reign of the Dihingiya Raja a third, the Barpātra Gohāin, was added. The first incumbent of this new office was a step-brother of the king himself. To each of these nobles was assigned a certain number of families, who were amenable only to their immediate masters, and over whom no other officer of government was allowed to exercise any jurisdiction.

According to David Scott, the Gohāins had allotted for their own use 10,000 *pāiks* or freemen, which he reckoned to be equivalent to a grant of Rs. 90,000 per annum.

Bar Barua. As the dominions of the Ahoms were gradually extended, it was found necessary to delegate many of the king's duties to others, and various new appointments were created. The most important were those of Bar Barua and Bar Phukan, both of which owe their origin to Pratāp Singh. The appointments in question were not hereditary, and they could be filled by any member of twelve specified families. Members of the families from which the three great Gohāins were respectively recruited were not eligible for these posts. The object of their exclusion seems to have been to prevent the accumulation of too much power in the hands of a single family.

The Bar Barua received the revenues and administered justice in those portions of the eastern provinces from Sadiya to Koliābar which lay outside the jurisdiction of the Gohāins, and was also, usually, the commander of the forces. He had control over 14,000 *pāiks,* but they were also bound to render service to the king. His perquisites consisted of an allowance of seven per cent. of the number for his private use, together with the fines levied from them for certain offences, and the fees paid by persons appointed to minor offices under government.

Bar Phukan. The Bar Phukan at first governed as Viceroy only the tract between the Kallang and the Brahmaputra in Nowgong, but, as the Ahoms extended their dominions further west, his charge increased, until it included the whole country from Koliābar to Goalpāra, with Gauhāti as his head-quarters. His office was considered of higher importance than that of the Bar Barua and, as he was further removed from the seat of Government, his powers were more extended.

Appeals from his orders were rare; and although the monarch alone could cause the shedding of blood, he, like the Gohāins, could sanction the execution of criminals by drowning. The Bar Barua did not possess this power.

Other local governors were also appointed from time to time, such as the Sadiya Khowa Gohāin, who ruled at Sadiya, and whose appointment dates from the overthrow of the Chutiya kingdom in 1523; the Morangi Khowa Gohāin, governor of the Nāga marches west of the Dhansiri; the Solāl Gohāin, who administered a great part of Nowgong and a portion of Chārduār after the head-quarters of the Bar Phukan had been transferred to Gauhāti; the Kājali Mukhia Gohāin, who resided at Kājalimukh and commanded a thousand men; the Raja of Sāring, and the Raja of Tipām, or the tract round Jaipur on the right bank of the Buri Dihing. The two last-mentioned were usually relatives of the king himself, the Sāring Raja being the heir-apparent and the Tipām Raja, the next in order of succession. **Other local governors.**

Elsewhere again, ruling chiefs who had made their submission to the Ahoms were transformed into governors acting on their behalf. To this category belonged the Rajas of Darrang, Dimarua, Rāni, Barduār, Nauduār and Beltola. They administered justice and collected the revenues in their own districts, but an appeal lay from their orders to the Bar Phukan and the monarch; those of them who held territory in the hills, however, were practically independent in that portion of their dominions. They were required to attend on the king in person with their prescribed contingent of men, when called upon to do so, and, in addition, all except the Raja of Rāni paid an annual tribute. Their office was hereditary, but they were liable to dismissal for misconduct.

There were numerous other officials, who were generally recruited from the fifteen families that have already been mentioned as possessing the monopoly of the highest appointments, but, for such as did not involve military service, the higher classes of the non-Ahom natives of the country were eligible, and also persons of foreign descent, provided that their families had been domiciled in the country for three or four generations. **Other officials.**

(i) Phukans.

Amongst these officers the highest in rank were the Phukans. Six of these, known as the Choruwa Phukan, formed collectively the council of the Bar Barua, but each had also his separate duties. To this group belonged the Naubaicha Phukan, who had an allotment of a thousand men, with which he manned the royal boats; the Bhitaruāl Phukan, the Na Phukan, the Dihingiya Phukan, the Deka Phukan and the Neog Phukan.

The Bar Phukan had a similar council of six subordinate Phukans, whom he was bound to consult in all matters of importance; these included the Pāni Phukan, who commanded six thousand *pāiks,* and the Deka Phukan, who commanded four thousand, the Dihingiya and Nek Phukans and two Chutiya Phukans.

Besides the above there was the Nyāy Khodā Phukan, who represented the sovereign in the administration of justice; and a number of others of inferior grades, including the Parbatiya Phukan, a Brāhman who managed the affairs of the chief queen; the Tāmbuli Phukan, who had care of the royal gardens; the Nausāliya Phukan who was responsible for the fleet; the Cholādhara Phukan, or keeper of the royal wardrobe; the Deoliya Phukan who looked after the Hindu temples; the Jalbhāri Phukan who had charge of the servants employed in them; the Khārgariya Phukan, or superintendent of the gunpowder factories, etc.

(ii) Baruas.

Next in rank to the Phukans were the Baruas, of whom there were twenty or more, including the Bhāndāri Barua or treasurer; the Duliya Barua, who had charge of the king's palanquins; the Chaudāngiya Barua, who superintended executions; the Thānikar Barua, or chief of the artificers; the Sonādār Barua, or mint master and chief jeweller; the Bej Barua, or physician to the royal family; the Hāti Barua, Ghorā Barua, and others.

(iii) Rājkhowas, Katakis, Kākatis, Dalais.

There were also twelve Rājkhowas, and a number of Katakis, Kākatis and Dalais. The first mentioned were commanders of three thousand men and were subordinate to the Bar Barua. They were often employed as arbitrators to settle disputes, and as the superintendents of public works. The Katakis acted as agents for the king in his dealings with foreign states and with the hill tribes; the Kākatis

were writers, and the Dalais expounded the *Jyotish Shāstras* and determined auspicious days for the commencement of important undertakings.

The State organization.

With the exception of the nobles, priests and persons of high caste and their slaves, the whole male population between the ages of fifteen and fifty were liable to render service to the State. They were known as *pāiks,* or foot soldiers, a term which was formerly very common in Bengal, where, for instance, it was applied to the guards who surrounded the palace of the independent Muhammadan kings. The *pāiks* were organised by *gots.* A *got* originally contained four *pāiks,* but in the reign of Rājesvar Singh the number was reduced to three in Upper Assam; one member of each *got* was obliged to be present, in rotation, for such work as might be required of him, and, during his absence from home, the other members were expected to cultivate his land and keep him supplied with food. In time of peace it was the custom to employ the *pāiks* on public works; and this is how the enormous tanks and the high embanked roads of Upper Assam, which are still a source of wonder to all who see them, came into existence. When war broke out, two members of a *got,* or even three, might be called on to attend at the same time.

The *pāiks* were further arranged by *khels,* which were provided with a regular gradation of officers; twenty *pāiks* were commanded by a *Bora,* one hundred by a *Saikia,* one thousand by a *Hazārika,* three thousand by a *Rājkhowa* and six thousand by a Phukan; and the whole were under as rigid discipline as a regular army. The *pāiks* were entitled to nominate, and claim the dismissal of, their *Boras* and *Saikias,* and sometimes even of their *Hazārikas.* This was a most valuable privilege, whereby they were saved from much of the oppression that would otherwise have fallen to their lot.

The *khels* were distributed amongst the high nobles in the manner already described, and each official had a certain number of *pāiks* assigned to him in lieu of pay. As the Ahom kings came more and more under the influence of Hindu priests, large numbers of *pāiks* were removed from their *khels* and assigned for the support of temples or of

Brāhmans. Some paiks purchased exemption from service. In no other way could a man escape from the control of the officers of his *khel*, whose jurisdiction was personal and not local. In the course of time, as the members of a *khel* became dispersed in different part of the country, this system grew most complicated and inconvenient, but it was still in vogue at the time of the British occupation, except in Kāmrup where a system of collecting revenue according to local divisions, called parganas, had been introduced by the Muhammadans.

As a reward for his services, each *pāik* was allowed two *puras* (nearly three acres) of the best rice land free of rent. If personal service was not required, he paid two rupees instead. He was given land for his house and garden, for which he paid a poll or house-tax of one rupee, except in Darrang, where a hearth-tax of the same amount was levied upon each family using a separate cooking-place. Anyone clearing land, other than the above, was allowed to hold it on the payment of one to two rupees a *pura*, so long as it was not required, on a new census taking place, to provide the *pāiks* with their proper allotments.

In the inundated parts of the country the land was cultivated chiefly by emigrating raiyats or, as they are now called, *pām* cultivators, who paid a plough tax. The hill tribes, who grew cotton, paid a hoe tax. Artisans and others who did not cultivate land paid a higher rate of poll tax, amounting to five rupees per head for gold-washers and brass-workers, and three rupees in the case of oil-pressers and fishermen.

The rice lands were redistributed from time to time, but not the homesteads, which descended from father to son. The only other lands which could be regarded as private property were the estates granted to the nobles and, in later times to temples and Brāhmans, which were cultivated by slaves or servants, or by *pāiks* attached to the estate and granted with it.

Law and justice.

In civil matters the Hindu law, as expounded by the Brāhmans, seems to have been generally followed in later times; at an earlier period the judge decided according to the custom of the country and his own standard of right

and wrong. The joint family system was in vogue, but amongst all except the highest classes, the family usually separated on the death of the father, when the sons took equal shares to the exclusion of daughters. The criminal law was characterized by the greatest harshness; and mutilation, branding with hot irons, and even more terrible punishments were common. In the case of offences against the person, the general principle was that of "an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth," and the culprit was punished with precisely the same injury as that inflicted by him on the complainant. The penalty for rebellion was various forms of capital punishment, such as starvation, flaying alive, impaling and hanging, of which the last mentioned was esteemed the most honourable. The death penalty was often inflicted, not only on the rebel himself, but on all the members of his family. No record was kept in criminal trials, but in civil cases a summary of the proceedings was drawn out and given to the successful party.

The chief judicial authorities were the three Gohāins, the Bar Barua and the Bar Phukan, in their respective provinces, and trials were conducted before them or their subordinates, each in his own jurisdiction. An appeal lay to them from their subordinates and, in the case of the Bar Barua and Bar Phukan, a second appeal could be made to the sovereign, which was dealt with on his behalf by the Nyāy Khoda Phukan. The president of each court was assisted by a number of assessors (Katakis, Ganaks or Pandits) by whose opinion he was usually guided. Prior to the Moāmariā disturbances, the administration of justice is said to have been speedy, efficient and impartial.

Slavery.

The chief nobles cultivated their private estates with the aid of slaves, *i.e.*, persons taken in war or purchased from the hill tribes, and of their retainers, who were either hill men or manumitted slaves. These persons were entirely at their masters' disposal, and they were not required to render service to the State. Their position was thus in some ways better than that of the *pāiks* who, it is said, often took refuge on private estates and passed themselves off as slaves.

The owning of slaves, however, was by no means confined to the nobles, and all persons of a respectable position had

one or more of them, by whom all the drudgery of the household and the labour of the fields were performed. The widespread prevalence of the institution is shown by the fact that David Scott is said to have released 12,000 slaves in Kāmrup alone. Many of these unfortunates were free-men who had lost their liberty by mortgaging their persons for a loan, or the descendants of such persons. They were bought and sold openly, the price ranging from about twenty rupees for an adult male of good caste to three rupees for a low-caste girl.

Social distinctions. The social distinctions between the aristocracy and the common people and, in later times, between the higher and lower castes, were rigidly enforced. None but the highest nobles had a right to wear shoes, or to carry an umbrella, or to travel in a palanquin, but the last mentioned privilege might be purchased for a sum of one thousand rupees. Persons of humble birth who wished to wear the *chaddar*, or shawl, were obliged to fold it over the left shoulder, and not over the right, as the upper classes did. The common people were not permitted to build houses of masonry, or with a rounded end, and no one but the king himself was allowed to have both ends of his house rounded. Musalmans, Morias, Doms and Hāris were forbidden to wear their hair long, and members of the two latter communities were further distinguished by having a fish and a broom, respectively, tattooed on their foreheads.

Coinage. As was usually the case in India, the standard coin of the Ahoms weighed a tola (two-fifths of an ounce) or 96 *ratis*. The peculiarity of the Ahom coins lay in their shape. Instead of being circular, they were octagonal, in accordance with the *sloka* in the *Jogini Tantra* which describes the country of the Ahoms as having eight sides. In other respects they bore a marked resemblance to the coins of the Koch kings. The earliest Ahom coins bear a date equivalent to 1543 A.D. and were struck by Suklenmung in the fourth year of his reign. More than a century elapsed before any of his successors followed his example. It then became the practice for each new ruler to mark his accession to the throne by the issue of coins bearing his name, but it was not until the reign of Rudra Singh that

the mint was kept constantly at work and smaller coins weighing 48 and 24 *ratis* respectively were issued. Still smaller coins, weighing 12 and 6 *ratis*, were first issued by Sib Singh, and coins weighing 3 *ratis* by Gaurināth. A regular gold currency was introduced by Sib Singh; before his time the only gold coins extant are those of Suklenmung and Udayāditya.

The legend on Suklenmung's coins was in the Ahom language and character. The coins of Jayadhvaj Singh and Chakradhvaj Singh bore Sanskrit legends in the Bengali script. The next three rulers reverted to Ahom, but from Rudra Singh onwards the use of Sanskrit became the rule. Two later kings (Pramata Singh and Rājesvar Singh) struck coins with Ahom legends in the year of their accession, but these were probably in the nature of medals for ceremonial distribution, as Sanskrit was the language used on all the other coins issued by them. Square coins with Persians legends were issued by Sib Singh in 1729 A.D. and by Rājeswar Singh in 1752. A square coin with a Sanskrit legend was issued by Lakshmi Singh in 1770.

The Ahom and Sanskrit legends were all of much the same tenor. The obverse gave the name of the king* and the date of issue, and the reverse the name of his favourite deity. Thus the translation of the Ahom legend on Suklenmung's coins runs as follows:—

Obverse. The great king Suklenmung, fifteenth year (of cycle).

Reverse. I the king offer prayers to Tārā.

The cycle referred to is the greater Jovian cycle of sixty years, known to Hindu astrologers as *Vrihaspati Chakra*, or wheel of Jupiter, which was in use amongst the Chinese 2,000 years before the Christian era.

As a typical coin bearing a Sanskrit legend we may take that of Chakradhvaj Singh which reads:—

Obverse. Of Svargadeb (heavenly deity) Chakradhvaj Singh, Sak 1585 (1663 A.D.).

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* For the reason given in the account of his reign, most of Sib Singh's coins bore also the name of his chief queen for the time being.

† An account of the Ahom system of Chronology will be found in Appendix B.

Reverse. Devoted (genitive) to the feet of Siva and Rām.

The deities most commonly mentioned are Indra on the coins with Ahom, and Siva (with or without his consorts) on those with Sanskrit legends; but the Vaishnava usurpers, Bharath and Sarbanand, invoked Krishna, while Brajanāth invoked both Rādhā and Krishna.*

Formalities observed by ambassadors.

When a neighbouring ruler sent ambassadors to the Ahom court, it was customary for them to wait on the frontier while the king's orders was being obtained. Transport was then provided for them to the capital where the Bar Barua supplied them with food the first day and the three great Gohāins on the three succeeding days. On the next four days this procedure was repeated, and they had interviews in turn with each of these high officers. They were next taken by a Barua to the royal presence, when presents were given, the object of their mission was explained, and the letter from their ruler was handed to the Ahom king. From this time till their departure they received their supplies from the royal store. When the time came for them to return home they were escorted to the frontier, and were usually accompanied by Ahom ambassadors who, in their turn, awaited on the frontier the pleasure of the ruler concerned, after which the procedure was similar to that described above †

Explanation of titles of Ahom kings and nobles.

The tribal names of the Ahom kings usually commenced with *Su*, meaning "tiger" (cf. *Singh*, lion), and ended with *phā*, meaning "heaven." Thus Sukāphā, "a tiger coming from heaven" (*kā*, come); Sunenphā, "a beautiful tiger of heaven" (*nen*, beautiful); Supātphā, "a lace-like tiger of heaven" (*pāt*, lace); and Sukhrungphā, "a furious tiger of heaven" (*khrung*, furious). In a few cases the final syllable was not *phā*, as in the case of Suhungmung, "the tiger of a renowned country," (*hung*, renowned and *mung*, country).

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* A list of all known Ahom coins (with plates) will be found in the *Numismatic Chronicle*, Fourth Series, Vol. IX. Reference may also be made to Mr. Stapleton's notes on the coinage of Assam, J. A. S. B., 1910, page 619.

† Ambassadors, or envoys of high rank, were called *bairāgis*, as distinguished from ordinary messengers or *katakis*.

The kings' Hindu names were often the Assamese equivalents of those given them by the Deodhāis. Gadādhar Singh was so called because *gadā* is the Assamese translation of the Ahom *pāt;* and Rudra Singh, because *rudra* in Assamese corresponds to *khrung* in Ahom. It has been suggested that the first syllable (*Su*) is the same as the Shān *Chāo,* meaning great, and ought to be written *Chu.* This, however, does not appear to be the case. The word *Chāo* also means "great" or "God" (Deb) in Ahom, and it is frequently used in addition to the regular prefix *Su;* Sunenphā, for instance, is described as Chāo Sunenphā on his coins. In this connection it may be mentioned that the Assamese title *Svargadeb* is the equivalent of the Ahom and Shān Chāo-phā, which is also the origin of the Burmese term *tsaubwa.* The word Gohāin, the title of the original three great officers of state, is also a translation of the Ahom *Chāo.* In the first instance, the word was Gosāin, but the Ahoms pronounced the *s* as *h,* and the spelling was altered accordingly. The Bar Gohāin was known in Ahom as Chāothāolung (God-old-great), the Burhā Gohāin, as Chāophrāngmung (God-wide-country) and the Barpātra Gohāin as Chāosenglung (God-holy-great).* The Bar Barua was known to the Ahoms as Phukenlung (male-noble-great) and the Bar Phukan as Phukanlung (male-origin-great).

Origin of word Assam.

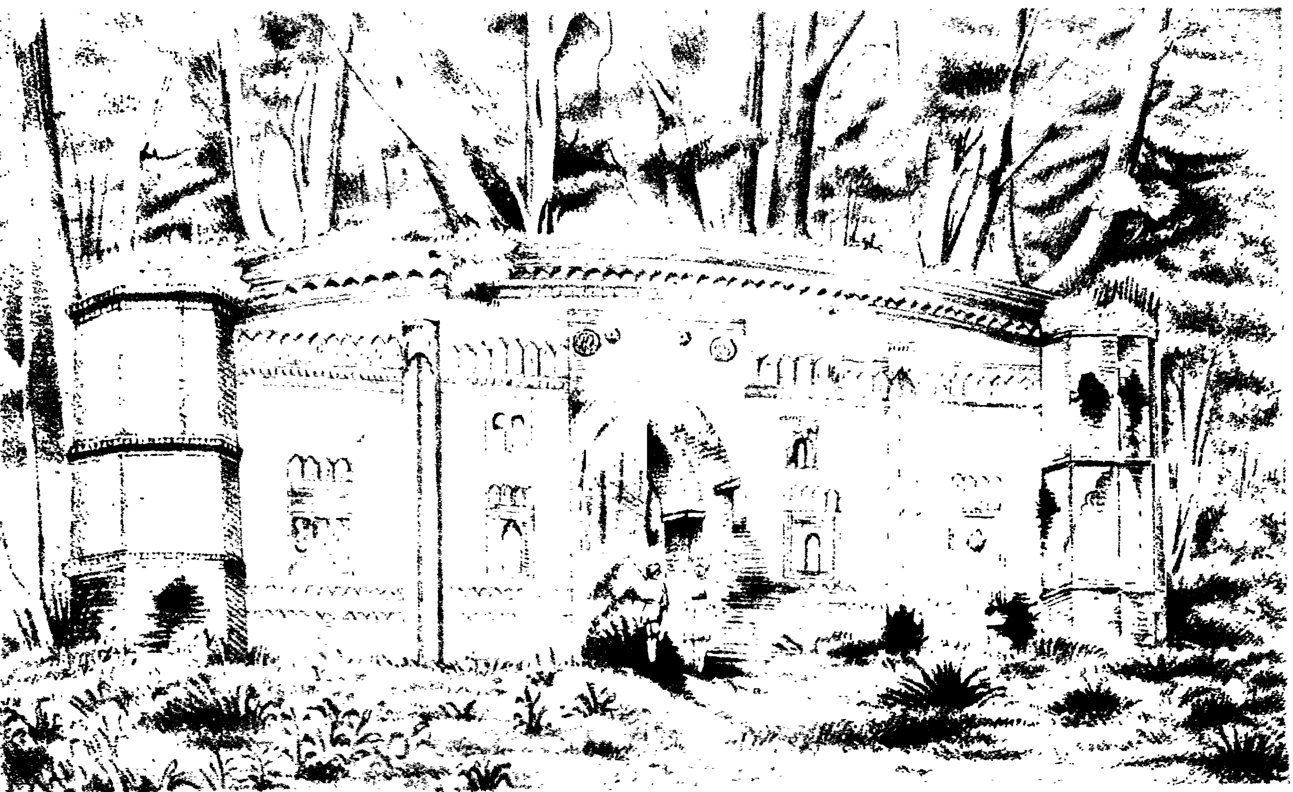
Many attempts have been made to trace the origin of the word Assam. Muhammadan historians wrote Āshām, and in the early dates of British rule it was spelt with only one *s.* According to some the word is derived from *Asama,* in the sense of "uneven," as distinguished from Samatata, or the level plains of East Bengal. This however seems unlikely. The term nowhere occurs prior to the Ahom occupation, and in the *Bansābali* of the Koch kings, it is applied to the Ahoms rather than to the country which they occupied. There is, I think, no doubt that the word is derived from the present designation of the Ahoms. At first sight, this does not carry us much further. The Ahoms called themselves Tai, and it still remains to be explained how they came to be known by

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* Senglung was the personal name of the first Barpātra Gohāin.

their present name. It has been suggested that this may be derived from Shān, or as the Assamese say, *Syām*. This word, however, is not used by the Assamese when speaking of the Ahoms, but only with reference to the people of Siam. The tradition of the Ahoms themselves is that the present name is derived from *Asama,* in the sense of "unequalled" or "peerless." They say that this was the term applied to them, at the time of Sukāphā's invasion of Assam, by the local tribes, in token of their admiration of the way in which the Ahom king first conquered and then conciliated them. Asama, however, is a Sanskrit derivative which these rude Mongolian tribes would not have been acquainted with, and, on this account, the suggested etymology has hitherto been rejected. But, although we may not accept the way in which the word is said to have come into use, it is nevertheless very probable that this derivation is, after all, the right one. The Ahoms, as we have seen, called themselves *Tai*, which means "glorious" (*cf.* the Chinese, "celestial"), and of this *Asama* is a fair Assamese equivalent, just as is Svargadeh of Chāophā and Gohāin of Chāo. The softening of the *s* to *h*, *i.e.*, the change from Asam to Aham or Ahom, has its counterpart in the change from Gosāin to Gohāin.

It may be mentioned here that the Burmese called Assam, Athan or Weithali; to the Chinese it was known as Weisāli, and to the Manipuris, as Tekau. Van Den Broucke and other early European geographers called the country west of the Bar Nadi, Koch Hājo, and that to the east of it, Koch Āsām.



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CHAPTER X.

THE KACHARIS.

Name, origin and local distribution.

The Kachāris may perhaps be described as the aborigines, or earliest known inhabitants, of the Brahmaputra valley. They are identical with the people called Mech in Goālpāra and North Bengal. These are the names given to them by outsiders. In the Brahmaputra valley the Kachāris call themselves Bodo or Bodo fisā (sons of the Bodo). In the North Cachar Hills they call themselves Dimāsā, a corruption of Dimā fisā or "sons of the great river." They were known to the Ahoms as Timisā, clearly a corruption of Dimāsā, so that this name must have been in use when they were still in the Dhansiri valley.

The origin of the word Kachāri (the first *a* is short in Assamese and long in Bengali) is difficult to trace, but it may be mentioned that, according to the Limbu legend of creation given by Risley in the *Tribes and Castes of Bengal,* one of the two progenitors of the human race settled in the Khachar country, which is the name given by the Nepalese to the tract at the foot of the hills between the Brahmaputra and Kosi rivers, and there became the father of the Koch, Mech and Dhimāl tribes. If Khachar was an early home of the Mech,* or the head-quarters of a powerful Mech dynasty, the members of the tribe in Assam may well have been called Khachāris or Kachāris; the omission of the aspirate is a common occurrence in words borrowed from Bengali or Assamese. The word Khachar is derived from a Sanskrit word meaning a "bordering region." The district of Cachar may have got its name directly from this word, or it may have been so-called after its principal tribe. In any case it is certain that the Kachāris did not get their name from Cachar. They are known by that name in many parts far removed from Cachar, and were so called long

* They must have come originally, as we have already seen, from the north-east, but the movement westwards would not necessarily be continuous and, at times, after a strong flow, there may easily have been an ebb.

before a section of the tribe took possession of that district. The earliest use of the word in their own records, with which I am acquainted, is in a letter of appointment by Raja Kirti Chandra, dated 1658 Sak, in which the " Kachārir Niyam," or the practice of the Kachāris, is referred to.

The Kachāris are believed to be very closely allied to the Koches, and also, so far at least as language is concerned, to the Chutiyas, Lālungs and Morāns of the Brahmaputra valley, and to the Gāros and Tipperas of the southern hills. Having regard to their wide distribution, and to the extent of country over which Bodo languages of a very uniform type are still current, it seems not improbable that at one time the major part of Assam and North-East Bengal formed a great Bodo kingdom, and that some, at least, of the Mlechchha kings mentioned in the old copper-plate inscriptions belonged to the Kachāri or some closely allied tribe.

Dearth of trustworthy information.

There are no written records of Kachāri rule, and the traditions current amongst the people consist of little more than long lists of kings, on the accuracy of which it is impossible to rely. According to Fisher the Kachāris of North Cachar believe that they once ruled in Kāmarupa, and their royal family traced its descent from Rajas of that country, of the line of Hā-tsung-tsā. The only trustworthy information regarding their past history is contained in the *Buranjis* which deal primarily with the history of the Ahoms. The details which they contain are, however, almost entirely confined to a narrative of the wars which were waged between the two nations. These have already been described in the chapters on Ahom rule, and will be referred to only briefly here.

Position in 13th, 14th and 15th centuries.

In the thirteenth century it would seem that the Kachāri kingdom extended along the south bank of the Brahmaputra, from the Dikhu to the Kallang, or beyond, and included also the valley of the Dhansiri and the tract which now forms the North Cachar subdivision. At that time, the country further west, though largely inhabited by Kachāris, appears to have formed part of the Hindu kingdom of Kāmatà. Towards the end of this century, it is narrated that the outlying Kachāri settlements east of the Dikhu river



CARVED PILLARS DIMAPUR

withdrew before the advance of the Ahoms. For a hundred years, this river appears to have formed the boundary between the two nations, and no hostilities between them are recorded until 1490, when a battle was fought on its banks. The Ahoms were defeated and were forced to sue for peace. But their power was rapidly growing, and during the next thirty years, in spite of this defeat, they gradually thrust the Kachāri boundary back to the Dhansiri river.*

Wars in the 16th century.

When war again broke out, in 1526, the neighbourhood of this river was the scene of two battles: the Kachāris were victorious in the first but suffered a crushing defeat in the second. Hostilities were renewed in 1531, and a collision occurred in the south of what is now the Golāghāt subdivision, in which the Kachāris were defeated and Detcha, the brother of their king, was slain. The Ahoms followed up their victory and, ascending the Dhansiri, penetrated as far as the Kachāri capital at Dimāpur on the Dhansiri, forty-five miles south of Golāghāt. Khunkhara, the Kachāri king, became a fugitive, and a relative named Detsung was set up by the victors in his stead.

Sack of Dimāpur.

In 1536 Detsung quarrelled with the Ahoms, who again ascended the Dhansiri and sacked Dimāpur. Detsung fled, but was followed, captured and put to death. After this invasion, the Kachāris deserted Dimāpur and the valley of the Dhansiri, and, retreating further south, established a new capital at Maibong.

Description of the ruins.

The ruins of Dimāpur, which are still in existence, show that, at that period, the Kachāris had attained a state of civilization considerably in advance of that of the Ahoms. The use of brick for building purposes was then practically unknown to the Ahoms, and all their buildings were of timber or bamboo, with mud-plastered walls. Dimāpur, on the other hand, was surrounded on three sides by a brick wall of the aggregate length of nearly two miles, while the fourth or southern side was bounded by the Dhansiri

* Dr. Wade's translation of a *buranji* no longer available describes various encounters between the Ahoms and Kachāris, but the discrepancies in names and dates are so great that it is impossible to make serious use of it.

river.* On the eastern side was a fine solid brick gateway, with a pointed arch and stones pierced to receive the hinges of double heavy doors. It was flanked by octagonal turrets of solid brick, and the intervening distance to the central archway was relieved by false windows of ornamental moulded brick-work. The curved battlement of the gateway, as well as the pointed arch over the entrance, point distinctly to the Bengali style of Muhammadan architecture. In this connection it will be remembered that, when the Ahom king Rudra Singh determined to erect brick buildings at Rangpur, he called in an artisan from Bengal to direct the operations. The excellence of the mortar is shown by the fact that, although the building has evidently been shaken on various occasions by earthquakes, it is still in a good state of preservation. Inside the enclosure (which has not yet been fully explored) are some ruins of a temple, or perhaps a market-place, the most notable feature of which is a double row of carved pillars of sandstone, averaging about 12 feet in height and 5 feet in circumference. There are also some curious V-shaped pillars which are apparently memorial stones. The nearest point at which the sandstone for these pillars could have been quarried is at least ten miles distant. It seems probable that the blocks of sandstone were brought and set up in the rough, and then carved *in situ;* otherwise they would have been much damaged in the process of erection. No two are precisely alike in the ornamentation, but all are of one general form, having large semi-circular tops, with concentric foliated carving below on the shaft. There are representations of the elephant, deer, dog, duck and peacock, but nowhere is there a human form or head. The inference seems to be that, at this time, the Kachāris were free from all Hindu influences. There are several fine tanks at Dimāpur, two of which are nearly 300 yards square.

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* This description of the ruins of Dimāpur is taken mainly from that given by Major Godwin-Austen in the journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal for 1874, page 1. A more recent account of the remains will be found in Dr. T. Bloch's Archæological Report for 1902-03. According to some, there was formely a wall on the south side also, which has now been washed away.

The first European to describe these ruins was Mr. Grange, who visited the locality in 1839. At that time the Kachāris still preserved traditions of their rule there, and attributed the erection of the city to "Chakradhvaj, the fourth Kachāri king." They ascribed its destruction to Kālā Pāhār, but admitted that they were defeated by the Ahoms about the same time. There are similar remains of another old city at Kāsomāri Pathār, near the Doyang river. The site of this city also is now covered with forest. It has not yet been completely examined.

Koch invasion.

We have seen that, after the destruction of Dimāpur by the Ahoms, the Kachāri kings established themselves at Maibong. This place is on the bank of the Mahur river. It was surrounded by a wall, inside of which the remains of several temples are still visible. Here they were soon to meet a fresh enemy. It is recorded in the Bansābali of the Darrang Rajas that the Kachāri king was defeated, about the middle of the sixteenth century, by Chilarāi, the brother and general of the great Koch king Nar Nārāyan. There is a small colony of people in the Cachar district known as Dehāns. These are reputed to be the descendants of some Koches who accompanied Chilarāi's army and remained in the country. They enjoyed special privileges in the days of Kachāri rule, and their chief, or Senapati, was allowed to enter the king's courtyard in his palanquin.

Old name of Kachāri kingdom.

The Kachāri king at that time was styled "Lord of Hidimbā." After this time, the name Hidimbā or Hiramba frequently occurs in inscriptions and other records, but there is no evidence of its use by the Kachāris at any earlier period. It has been suggested that it had long been the name of the Kachāri kingdom, and that Dimāpur is in reality a corruption of Hidimbāpur, but it seems more likely that Hidimbā was an old name of Cachar, which the Brāhmans afterwards connected with the Kachāri dynasty, just as in the Brahmaputra valley they connected successive dynasties of aboriginal potentates with the mythical Narak. Another derivation of the word Dimāpur has already been given.* A silver coin obtained a few years ago in the neighbourhood

* *Ante* page 92, footnote.

of Maibong bears a date equivalent to 1583 A.D. and was issued by Jaso Nārāyan Deb, "a worshipper of Hara Gauri, Siva and Durgā, of the line of Hāchengsā.*

Acquisition of Cachār plains.

Up to 1603 A.D. nothing more is known of Kachāri affairs, but it may be gathered that, during this period, the Kachāri kings held the greater part of the Nowgong district and the North Cachar Hills and gradually extended their rule into the plains of Cachar. The previous history of this tract is wrapped in oblivion, but there is a tradition that it was formerly included in the Tippera kingdom, and was presented by a king of that country to a Kachāri Raja who had married his daughter, about three hundred years ago.

Satrudaman invades Jaintia.

At the beginning of the seventeenth century the Jaintia king Dhan Mānik seized Prabhākar, the chief of Dimarua, whose family owed allegiance to the Kachāris. Prabhākar appealed to the latter, and their king, Satrudaman, demanded his release. Failing to obtain it, he led an army into the Jaintia kingdom and defeated Dhan Mānik, who thereupon submitted and undertook to pay tribute; he also gave two princesses to the Kachāri king and made over his nephew and heir-apparent, Jasa Mānik, as a hostage. The latter was kept a prisoner at Brahmapur, which was afterwards renamed Khaspur. To commemorate his victory, Satrudaman assumed the title Asimardan.

War with Ahoms.

Soon afterwards Dhan Mānik died. Satrudaman thereupon released Jasa Mānik from captivity and made him king of Jaintia, but he appears to have insisted on being recognized as his overlord. Jasa Mānik resented this, but, being unable by himself to offer any effectual resistance to the Kachāris, he endeavoured to embroil them with the Ahom king, Pratāp Singh. He offered him his daughter in marriage on the condition that he should send to fetch her through the Kachāri country. The refusal of Satrudaman to permit the girl to be taken through his dominions led, as

* Botham, J. A. S. B., 1912, Vol. VIII, page 556. Three undated silver coins were obtained at the same time and place, one of the same king Jaso Nārāyan and two of Pratāp Nārāyan, otherwise known as Satrudaman. Botham has also identified as of Tāmradhvaj, a coin figured by Stapleton in J. A. S. B., Vol. VI, page 160, No. 4.

Jasa Mānik had hoped, to a war with the Ahoms. The Kachāri troops were defeated in the first encounter, but they subsequently surprised and destroyed the Ahom garrison at Rahā. Satrudaman celebrated his success by assuming the title Pratāp Nārāyan and changing the name of his capital from Maibong to Kirtipur. The Ahom king prepared to take his revenge, but at this juncture he heard rumours of an approaching Muhammadan invasion, and was fain to make peace. At this period the Kachāris were still in possession of the portion of the Nowgong district which lies to the south of Rahā.

Satrudaman the hero of a Bengali novel.

Satrudaman is the hero of a Bengali novel called *Ranachandi*, which is said to be based on traditions current in Cachar, but the book does not appear to contain any reliable historical information. The previous ruler, his father Upendra Nārāyan, was killed, it is said, in the course of an invasion of Cachar by a detachment of Mir Jumlah's Assam expeditionary force, and Satrudaman and his affianced wife drove them out. As a matter of fact, Satrudaman must have died about forty years before the date of Mir Jumlah's invasion, and the reference is probably to one or other of the invasions of Cachar which took place during the reign of the Emperor Jehangir. The first occurred when Islām Khān was Governor of Bengal, and the second shortly after he had been succeeded (in 1612) by his brother Qasim Khan. The first of these invasions was abortive, but in the second, the Kachāri forts at Asuratikri and Pratāpgarh were captured, and the Kachāri king made peace by giving 40 elephants and a lakh of rupees for the Emperor, 5 elephants and Rs. 20,000 for the Subadar, and two elephants and Rs. 20,000 for Mubariz Khān, the thānādār of Bandāsal who commanded the invading force. In the account of this expedition mention is made of the Khāsias as a tribe living on the Kachāri frontier, and also of a tribe calling themselves Mughals, who claimed to be the descendants of soldiers left in charge of the country by Timur after he had conquered it.*

* These invasions are described in the *Bahāristan-i-Ghaibi*, which has been translated by Professor Jadunāth Sarkār.

Nar Nārāyan, Bhim Darpa and Indra Ballabh.

Satrudaman was succeeded by his son Nar Nārāyan. The latter died after a very brief reign, and was followed by his uncle Bhimbal or Bhim Darpa, who had acted as Commander-in-Chief during the war with the Ahoms. The only event recorded in his reign was a raid on some Ahom villages in, or near, the Dhansiri valley. He died in 1637 and was followed by his son Indra Ballabh. The latter, on his accession, sent a friendly message and presents to the Ahom king, but the tone of his communication gave offence, as being too independent, and his envoy met with a very cool reception. The valley of the Dhansiri had now been entirely deserted by the Kachāris and had relapsed into jungle.

Bir Darpa Nārāyan.

In 1644 Bir Darpa Nārāyan, who succeeded Indra Ballabh, re-opened communications with the Ahom king, but he was told that the style of his letter was unbecoming on the part of a protected prince. Bir Darpa took exception to the appellation "protected," but apparently withdrew his objection on being promised an Ahom princess in marriage. His relations with the Ahoms, however, continued to be unsatisfactory, and in 1660 he was warned that if he failed to send the usual envoys his country would be invaded. In 1663 Chakradhvaj Singh sent envoys announcing his succession to the throne and demanding the extradition of the Marangi Khowa Gohāin, who had fled to Cachar during Mir Jumlah's invasion. This request was refused by Bir Darpa who allowed the Ahom mission to depart unaccompanied by one of his own. But when Chakradhvaj defeated the Muhammadans in 1667, Bir Darpa sent envoys with complimentary messages, and friendly relations were thus restored. A conch shell has been discovered with the ten *avatārs*, or incarnations, of Krishna, carved on it, which bears an inscription to the effect that it was carved in Bir Darpa's reign in 1671.*

His three successors.

Bir Darpa died in 1681 and was succeeded by his son Garurdhvaj, who sent a messenger to the Bar Phukan asking that the usual congratulatory envoys might be sent to him by the Ahom king. He was told in reply that nothing

* Proceedings, Asiatic Society of Bengal, for July, 1895.

would be done until he had himself sent envoys with letters in the usual form to the Ahom king and his chief nobles. This he failed to do, and relations between the two courts again became strained till his death in 1695. He was succeeded in turn by his two sons, Makardhvaj and Udayāditya.

Tāmradhvaj defeated by Ahoms.

During the last forty years of the seventeenth century the Ahoms were fully occupied with Muhammadan invasions and internal troubles, and had neither the time nor the power to interfere with the Kachāris. The latter gradually forgot the defeats which the Ahoms had formerly inflicted on them, and became more and more self-confident. At last Tāmradhvaj, who was ruling when Rudra Singh ascended the Ahom throne, boldly proclaimed his independence. Rudra Singh was not the man to brook such an insult. In December 1706 two armies, numbering in all over 70,000 men, were despatched to invade the Kachāri country, one force marching up the bank of the Dhansiri and the other proceeding *viâ* Rahā and the valley of the Kopili. The Kachāris offered but little resistance to this overwhelming force, and their capital at Maibong was occupied without much difficulty. Tāmradhvaj fled to Khāspur in the plains of Cachar, whence he sent an urgent appeal for help to Rām Singh, Raja of Jaintia. In the meantime disease had effected what the arms of the Kachāris had been unable to accomplish, and the Ahoms, decimated by fever and dysentery, after demolishing the brick fort at Maibong, returned to their own country.

Made prisoner by Jaintias and rescued by Ahoms.

On hearing of this, Tāmradhvaj sent word to Rām Singh that his aid was no longer needed, but the latter, perceiving, as he thought, an opportunity for adding the Kachāri country to his own dominions, secured Tāmradhvaj's person by a stratagem and kept him a prisoner in Jaintiapur. Tāmradhvaj managed to send a letter to Rudra Singh, begging for forgiveness and imploring his assistance, and the latter, failing to obtain his release by peaceful means, despatched two armies to invade the Jaintia country. Jaintiapur was occupied, and, in April 1708, Tāmradhvaj was escorted *viâ* Maibong to Rudra Singh's camp near Bishnāth. He was there received in a grand Darbar and, on

his promising to pay tribute and to visit the Ahom king once a year, he was permitted to return to his own country. He was escorted by the Ahom troops as far as Demera, where he was met by a number of his own people. Soon after reaching Khāspur he fell seriously ill. Rudra Singh sent his own physicians to attend him, but in vain. He died in September 1708.

Sura Darpa and subsequent kings.

Tāmradhvaj was succeeded by his son Sura Darpa Nārāyan, a boy of nine, who was installed by some Ahom officers deputed for the purpose by Rudra Singh. In a manuscript copy of the *Nāradi Purān* it is stated that this work was written by one Bhubaneswar Vāchaspati, in the reign of Sura Darpa Nārāyan, by command of his mother Chandra Prabhā, widow of Tāmradhvaj Nārāyan.

The Ahom records contain no further reference to the Kachāri kings for nearly sixty years, but an inscription on a rock-cut temple at Maibong sets forth that it was excavated in the Sak year 1633 (1721 A.D.) in the reign of Harish Chandra Nārāyan, who is described as " Lord of Hidimbā "; and we know from a document, certifying the appointment of one Maniram as Vazir of Barkhola, that in 1736 the reigning monarch was named Kirti Chandra Nārāyan. In 1765, when messengers calling upon him to appear before Raja Rājesvar Singh were sent to Sandhikāri, who was then reigning, the latter refused to receive them. The Ahom king thereupon sent his Bar Barua with an army to Rahā. This had the desired effect. Sandhikāri surrendered himself to the Bar Barua and was taken before Rājesvar, by whom he was admonished; then having tendered his apologies, he was permitted to return to his country. He did not reign much longer; and, by 1771, he had been succeeded by Harish Chandra Nārāyan, " King of Hidamba," whose name is preserved in an inscription recording the erection of a palace at Khāspur in that year.

Fresh war with Ahoms.

During the convulsions that shook the Ahom kingdom in the latter part of the eighteenth century, many Moāmariās and other Ahom subjects took shelter in the territory of the Kachāri king Krishna Chandra, chiefly in the country along the upper reaches of the Jamuna. In Kamalesvar's reign the extradition of these refugees was demanded and

refused. This resulted in a war, which lasted from 1803 until 1805, when a decisive defeat was inflicted on the Kachāris and their Moāmariā allies.

Rāja Krishna Chandra converted to Hinduism.

The process of Hinduization had, probably, already commenced at Haibong, at least among the royal family and the court. At Khāspur it proceeded rapidly, and in 1790, the formal act of conversion took place; the Raja, Krishna Chandra, and his brother, Govind Chandra, entered the body of a copper effigy of a cow. On emerging from it, they were proclaimed to be Hindus of the Kshatriya caste, and a genealogy of a hundred generations, reaching to Bhim, the hero of the *Mahābhārat,* was composed for them by the Brāhmans. Many of the names are purely imaginary and others are misplaced, while some kings, who, as we know from other sources, reigned in fairly recent times, are not mentioned at all. The list, which will be found in Hunter's *Statistical Account of Assam* (Vol. II, page 403), is clearly a compound of oral tradition and deliberate invention, and has no historical value.

Gobind Chandra.

Krishna Chandra died in 1813 and was succeeded by his brother Gobind Chandra. The latter soon found himself involved in difficulties. Kohi Dān, who had been a table servant of the late Raja, was appointed to a post in the northern hilly tract, where he rebelled and endeavoured to form an independent kingdom. Gobind Chandra managed to inveigle him to Dharampur, where he caused him to be assassinated. The rebellion was continued by Kohi Dān's son Tulārām, himself a servant of the Raja, who, thinking that his own life was in danger, fled to the hills and successfully resisted all attempts to reduce him.

Manipuri conquest.

Gobind Chandra was thus deprived of the northern portion of his dominions. But worse was to follow. In 1818 Mārjit Singh of Manipur invaded his territory in the plains. He called to his aid Chaurjit Singh, the exiled Manipuri Raja, who helped him to repel the invasion, but, having done so, proceeded to establish himself in Cachar. In the following year Mārjit Singh was defeated by the Burmese, and again found his way to Cachar. With him came Gambhir Singh, another brother; and the three ended by taking the whole country and forcing the lawful monarch

to flee to Sylhet, where he invoked in vain the help of the British authorities. Subsequently Gambhir Singh quarrelled with Chaurjit Singh, and appropriated the whole of southern Cachar except Hailakandi, which remained in Mārjit Singh's possession. Chaurjit Singh now also sought shelter in Sylhet, and tendered his interest in Cachar to the British Government.

Burmese invasion.

Gobind Chandra, on the other hand, having failed to obtain redress in this direction, appealed to the Burmese, who promised to reinstate him; and it was their advance on Cachar with this declared object which led to their first conflict with the British. On learning of the advance of the Burmese, the local officers made overtures to Gambhir Singh, but the latter was averse from an alliance and held secret communication with the Burmese. When these facts were reported to the British Government, the local authorities were informed that it was not the intention of the Government to accord support to any particular chief, but merely to take the country under its protection, so far as was necessary to prevent the Burmese from occupying it. It was added that Gambhir Singh had forfeited all claim to consideration; and eventually, when the Burmese had been driven out, the country was restored, as will be seen further on, to the *de jure* ruler, Gobind Chandra. An undated coin of Gobind Chandra "King of Hidimba" has recently been found by Mr. F. C. Jackson, I.C.S., in the possession of a descendant of his Prime Minister.*

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* J. A. S. B., Vol. VI, page 161.

CHAPTER XI.

THE JAINTIA KINGS.

THE early history of the people of Jaintia is as obscure as that of the Kachāris, but in later times the references made to them in the chronicles of Ahom rule are supplemented by some inscriptions on coins, copper-plates and buildings.

The dominions of the Rajas of Jaintia included two entirely distinct tracts of country, namely, the Jaintia hills, which are inhabited by a Khāsi tribe called Synteng, and the plains country, south of these hills and north of the Barāk river, in the Sylhet district, now known as the Jaintia parganas, the inhabitants of which are Bengali Hindus and Muhammadans. The former tract was the original home of the dynasty. The latter was a later annexation, but it was this area which first bore the name of Jaintia, and which is mentioned in Paurānik and Tāntrik literature as containing one of the fifty-one famous shrines sacred to Durga.

Origin of Khāsis and Syntengs.

There is practically no difference between the inhabitants of the Khāsi, and those of the Jaintia, hills. They are both of the same physical type, and they speak the same language—Khāsi—which is remarkable as being the only surviving dialect in India, excluding Burma, of the Mon-Khmer family of languages. As stated elsewhere, dialects of this linguistic family are believed to have been spoken by the earliest Mongolian invaders of India, and at one time they were probably current over a considerable area. The evidence of philology, therefore, suggests the hypothesis that the Khāsis and Syntengs are a remnant of the first Mongolian overflow into India, who established themselves in their present habitat at a very remote period and who, owing to their isolated position, maintained their independence, while their congeners in the plains below were submerged in subsequent streams of immigration from the same direction. It may be suggested that they drifted to their present home in more recent times, just as the Mikirs, Kukis and other tribes have moved considerable distances within the short

space of a hundred years, but this is very improbable. The place and river names in the hills they inhabit all seem to be Khāsi, and the people themselves have no traditions of any such movement. A peculiar feature of this country is furnished by the curious monoliths, which the Khāsis and Syntengs used to erect in memory of their dead. Similar monoliths are found amongst the Hos and Mundas in Chota Nagpur, who speak dialects belonging to the same family of languages.

Their probable condition in pre-historic times.

As in the case of other rude tribes, the tendency of the Khāsis and Syntengs was to split up into numerous petty communities each under its own head. From time to time some ambitious chief would conquer and absorb some of the adjoining communities, and the kingdom thus formed would continue to exist until the weakness of his successors gave an opportunity for the prevailing disintegrating tendency to assert itself, when it would again dissolve into a number of small independent communities. The people seem at one time to have been polyandrists of the matriarchal type, and, in the hills, property still descends through the female. The chief of a Khāsi State is succeeded, not by his own, but by his sister's, son.

Dearth of historical material.

There is no record or tradition suggesting that the Khāsis and Syntengs ever owned allegiance to a single prince. When they first emerge from obscurity, we find them, so far as we can trace them, split up into the very same units that existed at the beginning of the last century. Of these the chief were the State of Jaintia, already described, and that of Khairam or Khyrim, the capital of which was at Nongkrem, not far from Shillong. Of the latter, as of the Khāsi States generally, there is no historical record, and the references in the annals of other kings are scanty and vague.

Traditions of Jaintia kings.

With the Rajas of Jaintia, however, thanks to the extension of their dominions into the southern plains, the case is different; and the inhabitants of the Jaintia parganas preserve in their traditions a list of kings, of whom the seventh, Dhan Mānik, is known to have been reigning at the close of the sixteenth century. The accuracy of the list, so

far as this and the subsequent kings are concerned, is confirmed by inscriptions on coins* and copper-plates, and by references made to them in the chronicles of the Ahom kings. Assuming that the entries in the list relating to kings anterior to Dhan Mānik are equally reliable, and allowing to each of them a reign of sixteen years, we obtain the following approximate dates of these earlier rulers:—

Parbat Rāy	1500 to 1516.
Mājha Gosāin	1516 to 1532.
Burhā Parbat Rāy . . .	1532 to 1548.
Bar Gosāin	1548 to 1564.
Bijay Mānik	1564 to 1580.
Pratāp Rāy	1580 to 1596.
Dhan Mānik	1596 to 1605.

As the names of these rulers are preserved, not in the traditions of their original subjects, the inhabitants of the Jaintia hills, but in those of the plains people over whom their rule was subsequently extended, it may be inferred that Parbat Rāy was not the founder of the dynasty. It may also be conjectured that it was he who extended the sway of the Jaintia kings into the plains tract at the foot of his ancestral kingdom in the hills. His name Parbat Rāy "the Lord of the Hills" seems to confirm this supposition. It may, therefore, perhaps be concluded that the inhabitants of the Jaintia hills already formed a single State in 1500 A.D., and that year may be taken roughly as the date when they became the masters of the Jaintia parganas. From the fact that all the kings mentioned in the above list bear Hindu names, it may further be inferred

* Unfortunately very few of the Jaintia coins bear the name of the king in whose reign they were minted. This omission is said to be due to a condition imposed by the Koches when they overran Jaintia. A description of these coins will be found in a paper contributed by me to the J. A. S. B., for 1895. The dates on these coins, which seem to have been modelled on those of the Koch kings, correspond to A.D. 1669, 1670, 1708, 1731, 1734, 1782, 1785 and 1790; and it may be assumed, when nothing is known to the contrary, that, as in the case of the early Ahoms, they were issued shortly after the accession of a new king.

that, at this time, they had already been brought, to some extent at least, under the influence of the Brāhmans.

There is a tradition, which may or may not be founded on fact, that, prior to its conquest by these hillmen, the Jaintia parganas were ruled by a line of Brāhman kings, of whom the last four were Kedaresvar Rāy, Dhanesvar Rāy, Kandarpa Rāy and Jayanta Rāy.

Defeat of Jaintias by Koches in sixteenth century.

The first reference to the inhabitants of the Khāsi and Jaintia hills in the records of other States occurs about the middle of the sixteenth century, in the annals of the Koch king Nar Nārāyan. At that time, as later, the two most prominent chiefs seem to have been the Rajas of Jaintia and Khairam. The former is alleged to have been defeated and slain by Nar Nārāyan's brother Chilarāi; and his son, after acknowledging himself a tributary, was set up in his place. Profiting by his example, the chief of Khairam, it is said, hastened to make his submission, and undertook to pay an annual tribute of a considerable amount. From his name, Virjya Vanta, it may be assumed that he also was more or less under the influence of Brāhman priests.

The name of the Jaintia king who was defeated by Chilarāi is not mentioned, but, from the date of the occurrence, it would seem to have been Bar Gosāin or Bijay Mānik. The *Rājmāla*, or Chronicles of the Kings of Tippera, contains a vague reference to an alleged invasion of Jaintia by the Tippera king, Braja Mānik, about the same time as that of the Koches under Chilarāi.

Jaintias defeated by Kachāris.

At the beginning of the seventeenth century the Jaintia king Dhan Mānik seized Prabhākar, the chief of Dimarua, whose family had formerly been vassals of the Kachāris. He appealed to the Kachāri Raja, who demanded his release and, meeting with a refusal, invaded Dhan Mānik's kingdom, routed his army, and compelled him to sue for peace. He acknowledged himself a tributary of the Kachāri monarch and gave him two princesses in marriage; he also made over his nephew and heir-apparent as a hostage.

Soon afterwards Dhan Mānik died, whereupon the Kachāri king released Jasa Mānik and installed him as king at Jaintiapur.

Subsequently, with a view to embroil the Kachāris with the Ahoms, Jasa Mānik sent messengers to the Ahom king, Pratāp Singh, offering him one of his daughters in marriage on the condition that he should send to fetch her through the Kachāri country. The refusal of the Kachāris to permit this had the anticipated result, and in 1618 A.D. war broke out between them and the Ahoms.

The Ahoms are entangled: the quarrel.

There is a tradition that Jasa Mānik went to Koch Bihār and married a daughter of Lakshmi Nārāyan, the ruler of the western Koch kingdom, who died in 1622. It is said that he brought back with him the image of Jaintesvari, which was thenceforth worshipped with great assiduity at Jaintiapur.*

Marriage with a Koch Princess.

Jasa Mānik was succeeded in turn by Sundar Rāy, Chota Parbat Rāy and Jasamanta Rāy. The last-mentioned ruler was a contemporary of the Ahom king Nariya Raja, who in 1647 sent envoys to him to open friendly relations. The occasion may possibly have been his accession to the throne, in which case we may fix the dates of the previous rulers tentatively as follows:—

Jaintia rulers from 1612 to 1647.

Jasa Mānik . . .	1605-1625.
Sundar Rāy . . .	1625-1636.
Chota Parbat Rāy . .	1636-1647.

The friendly intercourse with the Ahoms did not last long. A subject of the latter power, who had been granted permission to go to the Jaintia frontier for trading purposes, was seized under Jasamanta's orders, for some reason which has not been recorded. He was subsequently released, on the representation of the Ahom king, but his property was not given up, and this led to reprisals. The passes were closed; some Jaintia traders at Sonapur were made prisoners, and nine years elapsed before the quarrel was amicably settled.

Ditto. from 1647 to 1697.

In 1658 Jasamanta's grandson Pramata Rāy rebelled against him but was unsuccessful.

* This image is known to have been in Jaintiapur at the time of the Ahom conquest in 1708.

Jasamanta died in 1660 and was succeeded by his son Bān Singh. The latter was ousted by a relative named Pratāp Singh, who came from Bengal, where he had apparently been in exile. Pratāp Singh was deposed in his turn, by Lakshmi Nārāyan, who caused him to be put to death. Pratāp Singh's reign must have been extremely short, as news of his death reached the Ahom king, Chakradhvaj Singh, before the envoy whom he had deputed to announce his accession to the throne. When this envoy arrived the Ahom king refused to receive him or to read the letter which he carried, as he thought that to do so would bring him bad luck. Lakshmi Nārāyan asked the Ahoms for the rendition of the province of Dimarua, which had belonged to his ancestors, but they refused saying that they had taken it from the Muhammadans. Lakshmi Nārāyan continued to press his claim, whereupon, in 1678, the Ahom king broke off all relations with him.*

Lakshmi Nārāyan built a palace at Jaintiapur, the ruins of which still exist. There is an inscription on the gateway in which its erection by Lakshmi Nārāyan is set forth; it bears an indistinct date which has been read as 1632 Sak, equivalent to 1710 A.D., but as Rām Singh was ruling in 1707 there must be some mistake; the correct reading is perhaps 1602 Sak or 1680 A.D.

The following additions may now be made to the conjectural chronology of the Jaintia kings:—

Jasamanta Rāy . . .	1647-1660.
Bān Singh . . .	1660-1669.
Pratāp Singh . . .	1669
Lakshmi Nārāyan . .	1669-1697.

Rām Singh.

Lakshmi Nārāyan was followed by Rām Singh who reigned until 1708 A.D. He came into collision with the Kachāris and also with the Ahoms. The following account of the operations is taken from one of the Ahom *Buranjis*.

* Wade's rough translation of a *buranji* which is no longer available is the only authority for the period from 1668 to 1678, but the narrative there given is fairly full and there seems to be no reason to doubt its accuracy.

Ahom invasion of Jaintia.

In 1707 the Ahom king, Rudra Singh, invaded the dominions of the Kachāri king, Tāmradhvaj. The latter invoked the aid of Rām Singh, who collected an army and was preparing to march to his assistance when the Ahom army withdrew and Tāmradhvaj sent word to say that help was no longer needed. Rām Singh now determined to turn the situation to his own advantage and obtain possession of his neighbour's country. With this object he lured him into his power and carried him off to Jaintiapur. Tāmradhvaj was kept a close prisoner for some months, but at last he managed to send a letter invoking the aid of Rudra Singh. The latter wrote to his captor demanding his release and, failing to obtain it, despatched two armies to invade the Jaintia dominions. One army under the Bar Barua went through the Kachāri country to Khāspur and entered the Jaintia parganas from the east, while the other, under the Bar Phukan, starting from Jāgi, marched over the Jaintia hills direct to Jaintiapur.

The force proceeding *viâ* Khāspur was the first to arrive. Rām Singh had contemplated resistance, but was deterred on seeing the strength of the Ahom army, and prepared for flight. His nobles, however, who had all along opposed his policy in regard to the Kachâri king, would not permit him to escape and leave them to bear the brunt of the invasion; and they insisted on his surrendering himself to the Ahom general. The other Ahom army, under the Bar Phukan, after meeting with and overcoming a determined resistance, at a place some twenty miles within the hills, advanced steadily, and joined hands with the Bar Barua at Jaintiapur, leaving garrisons in eight fortified positions along the line of march.

So far the expedition had been a complete success. This was due partly to the fact that the Ahoms had not hitherto done anything to stir up the people against them. They now, however, proclaimed the annexation of the country. This was the signal for a general rising of the Syntengs, whose opposition had been only lukewarm so long as it had been merely a question of upholding their Raja in a policy of which they did not approve, but who were

ready to fight to the last against an attempt to subvert their cherished independence. The details of the operations have already been given in the history of Ahom rule* and it will suffice here to say that the hillmen at last succeeded in getting rid of the invaders. Their Raja, however, was taken a prisoner to Rudra Singh's camp, where he died of dysentery in 1708.

Jay Nārāyan. The heir-apparent, Jay Nārāyan, who was also a captive, gave two of his sisters in marriage to Rudra Singh. He was eventually released and returned to his own country. He appears to have ruled from 1708, when he succeeded his father, to 1729 when Bar Gosāin came to the throne.*

Bar Gosāin. Bar Gosāin enjoyed an unusually long reign of nearly 40 years. He abdicated in 1770, in favour of Chatra Singh, and became a *Sannyāsi* or religious mendicant. These facts are set forth in an inscription on a copper-plate recording the grant of certain lands to a Brāhman. The prime minister and commander-in-chief are cited as witnesses to the grant; and, from their names, it would appear that, while the latter was a Hindu, the former was a Synteng who still adhered to the tribal beliefs of his forefathers. The grant is stated to have been made with the consent of the Raja's nephews and nieces, so that inheritance through the female appears to have been still the custom in the Jaintia royal family.

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* *Ante* page 175.

* The dates of Bar Gosāin and his successors are given in a Jaintia Settlement Report which was written by Loch in 1839, and was found among the records of the Deputy Commissioner of Sylhet by Chandra Kanta Sen, who effected the settlement of 1897. I have followed the dates there given, except in the case of Bar Gosāin, whose abdication is mentioned in a copper-plate inscription bearing a date equivalent to 1770 A.D. The dates do not in all cases correspond to those on the (anonymous) coins, which were presumably issued to mark the accession of successive kings. If the dates given by Loch are correct, the explanation may be that there was sometimes a delay in issuing the new coins, owing to the postponement of the coronation ceremony or for some other reason. The coins which were probably issued by Bar Gosāin and Chatra Singh were dated two years, and those by Jatra Nārāyan and Rām Singh II one year, after the date of accession given by Loch. There is a coin bearing a date corresponding to 1785, which cannot be explained in this way Possibly Bijay Nārāyan succeeded in this year and not in 1786.

There is a tradition that Bar Gosāin and his sister Gauri Kuari were taken captive by the Siem, or chief, of Khairam, but escaped by the aid of men sent by Amar Singh, the Siem of Cherrapunji. Two villages in the Jaintia parganas are still held rent-free by the chief of the latter State, and it is said that they were given to Amar Singh as a reward for his services on this occasion. The feud between Jaintia and Khairam seems to have been of long standing; and it still existed at the time of the annexation of Jaintia in 1835.

Chatra Singh. Chatra Singh, who, as we have already seen, succeeded Bar Gosāin in 1770, was the first ruler of Jaintia to come into collision with the British. In 1774 the country is said to have been conquered by a British force under a Major Henniker, but it was restored on payment of a fine. No record is forthcoming of the causes which led to this expedition, but probably it was undertaken as a punishment for some act of aggression against the inhabitants of the adjacent plains of Sylhet.

Jatra Nārāyan and Bijay Nārāyan. Jatra Nārāyan succeeded Chatra Singh in 1781, and was himself succeeded by Bijay Nārāyan in 1786. The latter is named as ruler in a copper-plate deed of grant prepared in 1788 A.D.

Rām Singh II. Rām Singh II succeeded Bijay Nārāyan in 1789. His coins were issued in 1790, which was presumably the year of his coronation. A copper-plate inscription bears record of a land grant made by him in 1813.

In 1824, when the Burmese were threatening an invasion, David Scott opened negotiations with this prince, but he was reluctant to compromise his independence by any engagements so long as this could be avoided. A letter was addressed by the British Political Officer to the Burmese forbidding them to enter Jaintia territory. They ignored this letter and called on the Raja to come in and make his submission, on the ground that he was a vassal of the Ahom kings to whose position they had succeeded. A party of Burmese soon afterwards appeared near the Jaintia frontier, but they withdrew on the arrival of a small British detachment to reinforce the Raja's troops. The subsequent events will be described in the general narrative of the Burmese war.

Rājendra Singh.

Rām Singh II died in 1832 and was succeeded by Rājendra Singh, who was deposed in 1835, on the annexation of the country by the British, as narrated in Chapter XI.

Hinduism of the Jaintia kings.

The above account, fragmentary as it is, represents all that has yet been ascertained of the history of Jaintia. As regards the religion of the people, it would seem that the Syntengs were never much influenced by the Brāhmans, and that it was only the families of the Raja and of his leading nobles that were brought partially within the fold of Hinduism. The Rajas belonged to the Sākta sect and, however lax they may have been in obeying the prescribed restrictions in the matter of food and drink, they were very particular in the observance of the ghastly system of human sacrifices laid down in the *Kālika Purān*. There is a spot in the Fāljur pargana, where part of Sati's left leg is said to have fallen, and here human victims were immolated yearly on the ninth day of the Durga Puja. Similar sacrifices were also offered on special occasions, such as the birth of a son in the royal family, or the fulfilment of some request made to the gods. Frequently the victims were self-chosen, in which case, for some time previous to the sacrifice, they enjoyed the privilege of doing whatever they pleased without let or hindrance. Sometimes, however, the supply of voluntary victims ran short, and then strangers were kidnapped for the purpose from foreign territory.

CHAPTER XII.

MANIPUR.

THE State of Manipur, consisting, as it does, of a small but most fertile valley, isolated from the neighbouring kingdoms by an encircling zone of mountainous country inhabited by wild and warlike tribes, has long had an independent existence. It was known to the Shāns as Ka-sé and to the Burmese as Ka-thé, a corruption of the same word; the Ahoms called it Mekheli, and the Kachāris Magli, while the old Assamese name for it is Moglau. The Manipuris proper were regarded by Pemberton as "the descendants of a Tartar colony which emigrated from the north-west borders of China during the sanguinary conflicts for supremacy which took place between the different members of the Chinese and Tartar dynasties in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries." Their features clearly show that they belong to the Mongolian stock, and their language is closely allied to those of the Kuki tribes which border them on the south. They have records which purport to carry back their history to the thirtieth year of the Christian era. Between that date and 1714, however, only forty-seven kings are enumerated. This would give to each king a reign of nearly 36 years. Moreover, in the whole period, only one important event is mentioned, *viz.*, the conquest of Khumbat in 1475 A.D., by the united forces of Pong and Manipur, which was followed by the annexation of the Kubo valley to the latter country. It is clear that the account of this period is merely legendary. It must have been compiled at a comparatively recent time by the State chroniclers on no better basis than their own imagination and the fugitive memory of an illiterate people.

Early history and legends.

But from 1714 onwards the narrative is fairly continuous, and many of the events detailed in it are proved to have occurred by the independent records maintained by the kings of Ava. The year in question was marked by the accession of Pamheiba, who is reputed to have been a Nāga

Gharib Nawāz rises to power in 1714.

chief, and who subsequently became a convert to Hinduism, taking the name Gharib Nawāz or "patron of the poor." His people followed his example; and they are now conspicuous for the rigidity with which they observe the rules of caste and of ceremonial purity. They call themselves Kshatriyas, and are supported in their claim by the degraded Brāhmans who serve them, and who, after giving the State its present name and identifying it with the Manipur of the *Mahābhārat*,* have invented a legend that the people are descended from the hero Arjun by a Nāga woman, with whom he cohabited during his alleged sojourn in this neighbourhood.

But, whatever his ancestry, Gharib Nawāz proved himself an exceedingly able king and a most successful leader; and, under his energetic guidance, the Manipuris emerged from the obscurity in which they had lain for centuries. Between the years 1725 and 1749 he waged a series of successful wars against the Burmese, and captured many important towns. He might even have taken Ava itself, but for the fall of his standard in a gale, which so alarmed his superstitious mind that he hastily patched up a peace and retreated. His son, Ugat Shah, *alias* Kakilal Thaba, took advantage of the fiasco to sow discontent amongst his followers. Gharib Nawāz was compelled to go into exile, and was soon afterwards murdered at his son's instigation. This was the beginning of a series of what Mackenzie justly describes as internal wars "of the most savage and revolting type, in which sons murdered fathers, and brothers murdered brothers, without a single trait of heroism to relieve the dark scene of blood and treachery."

* The Manipur mentioned in the *Mahābhārat* was the capital of Babhruvahana, king of Kalinga. It must therefore have been situated somewhere in the south of Orissa or north of Madras. Various sites in that tract have been suggested by Lassen, Oppert and others. Its exact position is still uncertain, but there can be no doubt whatever that it was nowhere near the place of the same name in Assam. It has already been mentioned that the people of Java have also adapted the *Mahābhārat* to their own history and assigned local sites for the principal scenes. In the same way the Chutiya kingdom of Upper Assam was called Vidarbha. Cambodia gets its name from a place in Upper India.

First Burmese invasions.

The inevitable result supervened, and the power of Manipur, which Gharib Nawāz had raised so high, speedily collapsed. In 1755, and again in 1758, the country was overrun by the Burmese, and part of it was permanently annexed by them. In 1762, a treaty was negotiated by Jai Singh, the Manipuri king, with the British Government, whereby the latter undertook to assist in the recovery of the lost provinces; and in January 1763 a contingent of British troops, under Mr. Verelst, left Chittagong. They reached Khāspur, near Badarpur, in April, but suffered so much from the continuous rain and from disease that they fell back to Jaynagar, on the left bank of the Barāk, whence they were eventually recalled to Bengal. Later on, a letter was received from Jai Singh stating that he had no money, as all had been carried off by the Burmese, but offering to defray in the produce of the country* the expenses of any British troops that might be employed in his service. For some reason, not now apparent, the British seem, at this stage, to have broken off the negotiations.

Jai Singh's struggles with the Burmese.

A fresh invasion by the Burmese took place in 1765; and Jai Singh, who, in the interval, had lost and regained the throne, was defeated and forced to flee to Cachar. He returned as soon as the invaders left. He displaced with ease the man whom the Burmese had raised to the throne, but they promptly came back and defeated him near Lāngthābāl. He again became a fugitive, but, having obtained help from the Ahom king, Rājesvar Singh, as already narrated, by 1768 he was once more seated on the throne.

His troubles were not yet over. During the next fourteen years he was driven no less than four times into exile, but at last he seems to have made his peace with the Burmese; and from 1782 till the end of his reign, he was left in undisturbed possession of his devastated country. It

* In this letter we find the following list of prices:—silk, Rs. 5 per seer; iron, Rs. 5 per maund; cotton and wood oil, Re. 1-8-0 per maund; wax, thread and elephants' tusks, Rs. 20 per maund; camphor, Rs. 80 per maund; Manipuri cloths, Re. 1-8-0 each, and Manipuri "gold rupees," Rs. 12 each.

quickly recovered from the troubles which it had undergone and, in 1792, we find Jai Singh marching to the aid of the Ahom king Gaurināth with five hundred horse and four thousand foot. This expedition, as shown in Chapter VIII, was by no means a success.

Internal troubles after Jai Singh's death.

In 1799 Jai Singh died, in the course of a pilgrimage, at Bhagwāngola, on the bank of the Padma, after a long and chequered reign of nearly forty years. His eldest son, Harsha Chandra, succeeded him, but was murdered, after a reign of two years, by the brother of one of his father's wives. Jai Singh's second son, Madhu Chandra, who followed him, shared the same fate five years later. A third son, Chaurjit Singh, ascended the vacant throne, and the fourth, Marjit Singh, thereupon engaged in a series of abortive conspiracies. He at last induced the king of Ava to espouse his cause, and was installed by him as Raja in 1812. He put to death most of his brother's adherents and all likely candidates to the throne. In 1818, he invaded Cachar with a large force. It is said that he would have conquered that country with ease, had not the Raja, Gobind Chandra, after soliciting in vain the intervention of the British Government, invoked the aid of Chaurjit Singh, who was at that time living in Jaintia. The latter at once came to his assistance.

Manipuri Princes establish themselves in Cachar and Burmese occupy Manipur.

Marjit, afraid of his brother's influence with his soldiers, promptly retreated to Manipur, while Chaurjit Singh established himself in the south of Cachar, which Gobind Chandra is said to have promised him as a reward for his services. In the following year, Marjit himself got into trouble with the Burmese, who again invaded his unhappy country and drove him to Cachar. He now became reconciled to his brother Chaurjit, and helped him to turn out Govind Chandra, who fled to British territory. In 1823 their nephew Pitambar Singh led a force into Manipur and, dispossessing a man named Shubol who had been installed by the Burmese, proclaimed himself king. Chaurjit's brother, Gambhir Singh, thereupon marched against him with a small force and defeated him. He fled to Ava, but the country was by this time so utterly exhausted that

Gambhir Singh was unable to maintain his troops there and was obliged to return to Cachar. A quarrel between him and Chaurjit caused the latter to retire to Sylhet, where he tendered his interest in Cachar to the East India Company. Meanwhile Gambhir Singh possessed himself of the whole of south Cachar, except Hailakandi which was held by Marjit.

The British intervene.

At this stage, the Burmese, who had returned to Manipur and were also in possession of the Brahmaputra valley, threatened to annex Cachar. This was prevented by the British, as will be narrated in Chapter XIV. Gobind Chandra was restored by the British to the throne of Cachar, and Gambhir Singh was helped to recover possession of Manipur and also of the Kubo valley. His position as Raja was confirmed by the treaty of Yandabo, which was executed between the British and the Burmese in 1826.

CHAPTER XIII.

SYLHET.

Pre-historic speculations.

ALTHOUGH Sylhet may at times have formed part of the ancient kingdom of Kāmarupa, it was never during the historical period included in Assam, as the term was understood prior to 1874. But when the Chief Commissionership of Assam was created in that year as narrated in Chapter XVII, Sylhet was incorporated in the new Province. It is therefore necessary to refer briefly to its ancient history. This unfortunately is very obscure. Sylhet, is scarcely mentioned in the old legends, but from the circumstance that Bodo-speaking tribes are found both north and south of it, it may be conjectured that in early times it was inhabited by people of the same stock and was ruled by Bodo kings. The tract north of the Kushiāra river was at one time divided into three petty kingdoms—Jaintia (already dealt with) Laur, and Gaur, or Sylhet Proper. The latter word perhaps survives in the " Goārār Jangal," the name of two old embankments which run from the Ghogra to a former bed of the Barāk river in the Rājnagar pargana of Cachar. The more westerly of these embankments is in places a hundred feet broad at the base and ten feet in height, and there is a buried brick wall 140 feet long by six feet broad. There is a tradition that they were erected by some invaders called Goārs.

The tract south of the Kushiāra was often under the kings of Tippera. According to a document purporting to be a copy of two old copper-plates (no longer available) found in the possession of a Brāhman who claimed to be a descendant of one of the original grantees, Dharmaphā, and Sudharmaphā, kings of the mountains of Tippera, made to certain Brāhmans grants of land situated, in the former case, between the Kushiāra, Barāk and Hāskātā rivers, and in the latter, on both banks of the Manu. The kings in question were the eighth and ninth rulers of Tippera

according to the local *Rājmāla,* of which an analysis has been given by the Rev. J. Long.*

Copper-plates of Gobind Deb and his son.

Two copper-plates that were found in the foundations of a ruined building on a hillock near Bhātarābazar, which is reputed locally to have been the palace of Raja Gaurgobind, have been deciphered by the late Rājendralāla Mittra.† They record grants of land by two kings of the lunar line, Gobind *alias* Keshab Deb and his son Ishān Deb. Their genealogy is as follows:—

(i) Nabagirvān *alias* Kharavān.
(ii) Gokul.
(iii) Nārāyan.
(iv) Gobind *alias* Keshab Deb.
(v) Ishān Deb.

The date on Ishān Deb's inscription gives only his regnal year. That on Gobind Deb's is doubtful. It has been assumed to refer to the Kāli Yuga, and the decipherer of the plates read it as the equivalent of 1245 A.D. The first two figures however are very indistinct, and he seems to have been influenced by the supposed necessity of accommodating the date to that of the invasion of Sylhet by Jalāluddin Khani, whom he wrongly identified with Shāh Jalāl, the traditional conqueror of the country for the Muhammadans. Both plates record grants of land, Gobind Deb's for the upkeep of a temple of Siva, and Ishān Deb's for that of a temple of Vishnu. The measurement in both cases is given in *hāls*. A *hāl* is equal to four and four-fifths acres, and it is still the best-known unit of measurement in some parts of the Surma valley.

The prime minister of Ishān Deb was a Baidya, and the writer of his inscription was a Dās or Kaibartta. Rājendralāla Mittra suggests that these kings were sovereigns

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* "Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal," Vol. XIX, page 533. The inscriptions are dated respectively in the 51st and 164th year of the Tippera era, corresponding, according to the *Rājmāla* to 641 and 753 A.D. This difference of 113 years in the dates of two successive princes shows that there is something wrong somewhere, but it would be useless to pursue the matter in the absence of the original plates and in view of the legendary character of the *Rājmāla.*

† "Proceedings of the Asiatic Society of Bengal" for 1880.

of Cachar, because they professed to be of the dynasty of Ghatotkacha, son of Bhim, one of the Pāndu princes, by Hidimba, the daughter of an aboriginal cannibal chief, and, according to him, the Kachāri kings claimed a similar descent. This, however, is by no means conclusive. It is quite possible that the same genealogy did duty for successive converts to Hinduism amongst the ruling chiefs of the Surma valley just as did that of Narak and Bhagadatta for those in the valley of the Brahmaputra.

The Muhammadan conquest.

The conquest of Gaur by the Muhammadans is ascribed by tradition to Shah Jalāl of Yemen.* The legend is well known, but it contains scarcely any historical facts. The Saint is said to have died in 1189 A.D., but on the other hand, he is said to have come to Delhi during the reign of Sultan Ala-ud-din (1296 to 1316 A.D.)) and to have gone to Sylhet with the army commanded by Sikandar Shah, the Sultan's nephew. This tradition is confirmed by a Muhammadan inscription of 1512 A.D. in which it is said that the conquest of Sylhet was effected by Sikandar Khan Ghazi in the reign of Firuz Shah (of Bengal) in 1303 A.D.† It may therefore be concluded that the north-west portion of Sylhet fell into the hands of the Muhammadans in the early part of the fourteenth century.

The name of the conquered Hindu king is given in the Shah Jalāl legend as Gaur Gobind, Gaur or Gor being, it is alleged, the name of his capital, as it was also of the country. Rājendralāla Mittra identified him with the Gobind Deb of the Bhāterā copper-plates but this seems unlikely. The latter was succeeded on the throne by his son Ishān Deb, and the identification is possible only if we assume that the conquest was incomplete, and that, while one part of his dominions passed under Muslim rule, the other part remained independent, at least for some years.

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* The short account of Shah Jālal, given by Dr. Wise, in the "Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal for 1873," p. 278, seems to be based on the *Suhel-i-Yemen* compiled in 1860 by Nasiruddin Hāldār. The original Persian text was published in Calcutta in 1894, and a metrical translation into Musalmāni Bengali by Ilāhi Baksh was printed in the Bengali year 1278.

† J. A. S. B. 1922, p. 43.

The oldest historical record is an inscription on a stone inside the famous shrine of Shah Jalāl at Sylhet. This record was made in the time of Shamsuddin Yusuf Shah, wh ruled in Bengal from 1474 to 1481, but unfortunately only part of it is decipherable in its present position.

Subjugation of Rajas of Laur.

Whenever it took place, the original conquest did not extend to Laur or to Jaintia. The Rajas of these tracts continued to rule north of the Surma, while in the south, the Tipperas probably held a considerable area.* The Raja of Jaintia was still unsubdued at the time of the British conquest. The small State of Laur remained independent until, in Akbar's time, the Mughals became masters of Bengal, when the Raja made his submission to the Emperor. He undertook to protect the frontier from the incursions of the hill tribes, but he was not required to pay anything in the nature of tribute or revenue. In Aurangzeb's reign, the Raja, whose name was Gobind, was summoned to Delhi, and there became a Muhammadan. His grandson, it is said, removed his residence to Baniyachang in the open plain, and an assessment was gradually imposed on the family estates.†

Expulsion of Tipperas from the plains.

The relations between the Muhammadans and the Tipperas are very obscure. Various collisions are mentioned in the *Rājmāla*, and several victories are claimed by the Tippera kings, as well as occasional conquests of Sylhet, but, in the end, the Muhammadans extended their rule over the whole of the plains, and the Tippera Raja was compelled to pay revenue on his estates there.

Rulers of Sylhet under the Mughals.

The Governor of Sylhet in the days of the independent kings of Bengal held the rank of Nawāb. Under the Mughals, Sylhet was governed by an *Amil*. This official was subordinate to the Nawāb of Dacca, but he was himself

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* In the *Ain-i-Akbari*, Jaintia and Laur are mentioned amongst the eight *mahals* of the *sarkar* of Sylhet, but this does not necessarily mean that they actually formed part of Akbar's dominions.

† Professor Padmanāth Bhattāchārya quotes a local tradition that Baniyachang had previously been the capital of Kesava Misra, the Brāhman ancestor of Gobind Deb, who came from the north-west and settled there. A fort was subsequently constructed at Laur, as a protection against raids by the Khāsis.

known locally as Nawāb. The *Amils* seem to have been constantly changed, and the names of about forty of them can still be gathered from their seals. One of the best was Fasād Khān, who held office at the end of the seventeenth century and constructed numerous roads and bridges. An inscription on a bridge, which still bears his name, records its construction by him in 1085 A.H. or 1673 A.D.

Sylhet was the birthplace of Chaitanya, the great Vaishnava reformer of Bengal, and of Advaita, another famous Vaishnava divine, of Raghunāth Siromani, the logician, Vaninath Vidyāsāgar, the grammarian, and other men of light and learning.

In early times the Sylhet district supplied India with eunuchs, but Jahāngir issued an edict forbidding its inhabitants to castrate boys.

The state of affairs in the early days of British rule.

Sylhet passed into the hands of the British in 1765, together with the rest of Bengal. Thirteen years later, a Mr. Robert Lindsay became Collector, after he had been only two years in the country, by means of an intrigue in the Dacca Council, which was at that time in charge of Sylhet; and his vivacious account of its condition at that time is reproduced in the *Lives of the Lindsays*.* At that time there was little silver or copper in circulation, and the revenue of the district amounting to Rs. 2,50,000, was all paid in cowries, or small shells, of which 5,120 went to the rupee. The management of this ponderous currency was most troublesome; and its storage and transport to Dacca, where the cowries were sold by auction, "occasioned a cost of no less than ten per cent. exclusive of depredations on the passage down." In those days the Company's servants were allowed to trade on their own account. Mr. Lindsay soon made a fortune by dealing in lime, while he, at the same time, relieved the officials at Dacca of the vexatious business of disposing of a cargo of 1,280 millions of cowries. He obtained the lease of the lime quarries in the hills below Cherrapunji from the Khāsi chiefs who owned them, used the cowries to meet the charges for extracting

* Vol. III, pp. 163, *seq.*

and burning the stone, and paid his revenue at Dacca in rupees realized from the sale of the lime in the markets of Bengal.

Mr. Lindsay experimented with the cultivation of indigo and the silk worm, but he was not very successful, owing to the heavy floods. He also grew some coffee, but did not persevere in its cultivation. He imported a quantity of wheat and distributed it amongst a number of the zamindars, but they did not attempt to plant it out. The crops in his time were generally good; in 1781, however, there was an exceptionally heavy flood, which swept away the granaries and reduced the people to such straits that one-third are said to have died of starvation.

The military force at first consisted of about a hundred up-country sepoys, but the climate was prejudicial to their health and the mortality amongst them was very heavy. Mr. Lindsay accordingly obtained sanction to replace them by a locally recruited Militia corps, which he accompanied himself whenever any difficult task had to be performed. On one occasion, during the Muharram, the Muhammadans in Sylhet rose and set fire to the town in several places. Only fifty of the Militia were on the spot, but with these Mr. Lindsay marched to the place where the crowd had collected and dispersed it, killing the ringleader, who attacked him with a sword, by a shot from his own pistol.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE BURMESE WAR.

The Burmese fall foul of the British.

It is impossible to say what would have been the ultimate fate of the unhappy Assamese, had they been left unaided to the tender mercies of the Burmese. The latter, however, soon embroiled themselves with the British, for whom they had conceived the greatest contempt. This feeling seems to have been engendered, partly by their own easy victories in other directions, partly by the paucity of British troops along the frontier, and partly by the proved inefficiency of the Ahom standing army, which was dressed and drilled on the model of the Company's sepoys. But, whatever the cause, they began to behave with the greatest insolence and to commit various wanton acts of aggression, not only along the northern frontier of Bengal, but also on the borders of Chittagong and Sylhet. Remonstrances were made by the Governor-General without effect, and it was at last decided to resort to arms.

Operations in Cachar.

The first active measures were taken in the Surma valley. News having been received that the Burmese Governor of the Brahmaputra valley was contemplating the invasion of Cachar, he was informed that that tract had been taken under British protection, and a detachment of sixteen hundred men was sent to the frontier of Sylhet. On their arrival it was found that three Burmese forces were in the neighbourhood. One of about four thousand men was advancing from Nowgong through North Cachar; another was marching on the same objective by way of the Jaintia hills, while a third, from Manipur, had already arrived in South Cachar and inflicted a defeat on Gambhir Singh's local levies. In reply to a protest that was addressed to them, the Burmese commanders stated that they had received orders from the king of Ava to replace Gobind Chandra on the throne of Cachar and to arrest the three Manipuri chiefs who had ousted him. On receiving this

communication, the British commandant determined to take the offensive before the hostile forces had joined hands. On the 17th January, 1824, he marched with his whole detachment against the army from Nowgong, which had stockaded itself at Bikrampur. He came in sight of the enemy at daylight, and, attacking at once, soon put them to flight. The Burmese escaped into the hills, whither he was not strong enough to pursue them, and they subsequently effected a junction with the Manipur force.

The British detachment was soon afterwards withdrawn to Badarpur, whereupon the Burmese advanced to Jātrāpur, some eight miles distant, and erected stockades on both banks of the Barāk, which they connected by a bridge over the river. Their forces at this point amounted to about six thousand men, of whom two thousand were Burmese and the remainder Assamese and Kachāris. There was a separate detachment of about two thousand men at Kilā Kāndi in the south-east of Cachar. The Burmese gradually pushed forward their stockades on the north bank of the Barāk until, at last, they were within a thousand yards of the British advanced post on the south bank. They were then attacked and put to flight. The Nowgong and Manipur contingents retreated in different directions. The former were again attacked at the foot of the Bhertika Pass, on the bank of the Jatinga river. They were driven from their stockades, and fled into the hills, whence they made their way back to Nowgong.

The British then marched against the Manipur force which had taken up a very strong position at Dudpatli. The assault failed, and a retreat was made to Jātrāpur. Here reinforcements were received which would have sufficed for a fresh attack, but the Burmese, although they had repelled the assault on their stockades, had lost heavily, and had already fallen back to Manipur. The scarcity of supplies in Cachar rendered it extremely difficult to maintain a large force there; and the British, on hearing of the enemy's retreat, went into cantonments at Sylhet, leaving only a detachment of the Rangpur Local Infantry in Cachar.

Operations in the Brahmaputra valley.

These events had preceded the formal declaration of war, which was not proclaimed until the 5th March. In anticipation of active operations a force of about 3,000 men, with several cannon and a gunboat flotilla, had been collected at Goālpāra, on the frontier of the old Ahom kingdom. To this force was now assigned the task of turning the Burmese out of the Brahmaputra valley. After a toilsome journey of fifteen days through the jungles and trackless swamps, to which the greater part of the country between Goālpāra and Gauhāti was at that time given over, it reached the latter place on the 28th March.

Burmese retreat to Upper Assam.

The Burmese had erected strong stockades near Gauhāti, but their numbers had been greatly reduced by desertions, by the withdrawal of troops for service in Burma itself, and by the operations in the direction of Cachar which have already been described, and their generals did not feel strong enough to venture on an engagement. They accordingly retired to Marā Mukh in Upper Assam, after massacring many of the unfortunate inhabitants, whose bodies, barbarously mutilated, were found by the advancing British, along the road and in the stockades at Gauhāti.

British troops make a long halt at Gauhāti.

Had more active measures been taken at this stage, it is probable that the whole province might have been cleared of the enemy before the advent of the rainy season. But in the absence of information regarding the state of the roads, the possibility of obtaining supplies, and the attitude of the natives of the country, a long halt was made at Gauhāti. For some time, the only step in advance was taken by the Civilian, David Scott, who, as Agent to the Governor-General for the Eastern Frontier, had accompanied the Cachar force in the operations already described. In order to join the troops in the Brahmaputra valley, he crossed over the Jaintia hills with three companies of the 23rd Native Infantry and entered Nowgong, whence he marched westwards to Gauhāti, leaving his escort to hold the town of Nowgong.

About the end of April the Burmese, finding themselves unmolested, advanced again as far as Koliābar. A force was sent from Gauhāti to eject them. They had made a stockade at Hātbar, but, on the approach of the British troops,

retreated to Rangaligarh without waiting to be attacked. A party that afterwards attempted to reoccupy the stockade was surprised, and put to flight with considerable loss. A small British detachment was now placed in the stockade. The Burmese made a second attack on it, but the defenders were on the alert, and routed their assailants, killing a large number. The Burmese then abandoned Rangaligarh and fell back once more on Marā Mukh.

Fresh advance by Burmese. Terrible atrocities perpetrated by them.

Colonel Richards, the British commander, had established his headquarters at Koliābar but, when the rains set in, the difficulty of procuring supplies compelled him to return to Gauhāti. The Burmese thereupon reoccupied not only Koliābar, but also Rahā and Nowgong, and, in revenge for the friendly disposition which the Assamese had shown towards the British troops, they pillaged all the surrounding country and committed appalling atrocities on the helpless inhabitants. Some they flayed alive, others they burnt in oil, and others again they drove in crowds into the village *nāmghars*, or prayer houses, which they then set on fire.

The terror with which they inspired the people was so great that many thousands fled into the hills and jungles to the south, where large numbers died of disease or starvation; and only a small remnant, after enduring unspeakable hardships, managed to reach the plains of the Surma valley. Several of the submontane villages of Jaintia are inhabited by their descendants, who still talk pure Assamese. The depopulation of the region round Doboka and the Kopili valley dates from this disastrous time, which is still fresh in the memory of the inhabitants of Nowgong, who speak with as much horror of the *Mānar Upadrab*, or "oppressions of the Burmese," as do the inhabitants of the Bengal littoral of the devastations of the Maghs, to which they were exposed before the establishment of the *Pax Britannica*.

Second campaign in the Brahmaputra valley.

When the rains were over, arrangements were made for a fresh advance of the British troops. The only practicable means of transport was by boats towed laboriously against the strong current of the river, and the rate of progress was necessarily very slow. Two divisions were despatched

about the end of October, the one by way of the Kallang, and the other up the main stream of the Brahmaputra. The former, which was remarkably well served by its Intelligence Officer, Lieutenant Neufville, surprised several Burmese detachments, at Rahā and elsewhere, and only just failed to catch the Governor himself at Nowgong.

Advance to Jorhāt.

When Koliābar had been secured, the rest of the troops were gradually removed thither. Early in January Marā Mukh was occupied. From this point, several detachments were sent out, who operated with great success against various stockades in the vicinity held by the Burmese. The Burmese were thus compelled to concentrate their forces at Jorhāt, leaving the road open for the British advance. They were also, at this time, distracted by internal disputes, and the Burhā Raja, or Burmese Governor, was assassinated by a rival leader, known as the Shān Phukan. Despairing of defending Jorhāt, they set fire to their stockade and fell back upon the capital at Rangpur.

The advance of the British troops was hampered by heavy rain, but they reached Jorhāt on the 17th January and Gaurisāgar eight days later. The commissariat flotilla, with its escort of gunboats, being unable to ascend the shallow stream of the Dikhu, halted at its mouth, and from this point all supplies had to be transported by road.

Burmese defeated near Rangpur.

On the morning of the 27th January the enemy attacked an advanced post which was holding a bridge over the Nāmdāng river. Supports were moved up quickly, and then, in order to encourage the Burmese to show themselves, a retreat from the bridge was feigned. The Burmese fell into the trap and rushed forward, whereupon they were attacked and put to flight with heavy loss.

The above account of the operations against the Burmese has been taken mainly from Wilson's *Narrative of the Burmese War*. The remaining incidents of this campaign are best told in the author's own words:—

"Having been joined by the requisite reinforcement of guns, Colonel Richards resumed his march towards Rangpur on the morning of the 29th. The approach of the capital had been fortified by the enemy; a stockade had been drawn across the road, the left of which was strengthened by an entrenched tank, a little way in

front, and the right was within gunshot of the fort; the position mounted several guns, and was defended by a strong party.

"On approaching the defences, the assailants were saluted by a heavy fire, which brought down half the leading division and caused a momentary check: a couple of shells and a round or two of grape having been thrown in, the column again advanced and the stockade was escaladed and carried by the right wing of the 57th Regiment, under Captain Martin, supported by the 46th.

"The tank on the right was also occupied and two temples, one on the right and the other on the left, were taken possession of, by which the south side of the fort was completely invested and the enemy was driven in at all points. In this action Lieutenant-Colonel Richards and Lieutenant Brooke* were wounded; the former slightly, the latter severely; the number of wounded was considerable, but the loss in killed was of little amount.

Burmese evacuate the Province.

"The result of these two engagements not only dispirited the Burmese, but gave renewed inveteracy to the divisions that prevailed amongst them. The two Chiefs, the Sām (or Shān) and the Bagli Phukans, were willing to stipulate for terms; but the more numerous party, headed by the subordinate Chiefs, were resolutely bent on resistance and threatened the advocates of pacific measures with extermination. The latter, however, so far prevailed as to despatch a messenger to the British commander, a Bauddha priest, a native of Ceylon, but brought up in Ava, Dharmadhar Brahmachāri, to negotiate terms for the surrender of Rangpur, and they were finally agreed on through his mediation. Such of the garrison as continued hostile were allowed to retire into the Burman territory, on their engaging to abstain from any act of aggression on their retreat, and those who were pacifically inclined were suffered to remain unmolested with their families and property: their final destination to await the decision of the Governor-General's Agent, but in the event of peace with Ava they were not to be given up to that government.†

"Colonel Richards was induced to accede to these conditions, by his conviction of the impossibility of preventing the escape of the garrison, upon the capture of the fort, or of pursuing them on their flight. It was also to have been apprehended, if the evacuation of

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* Afterwards Raja Brooke of Sarawak.

† Most of these eventually settled down at Singimāri in the Goālpāra district, where lands were assigned them for cultivation. Those who had no wives of their own race married women of the country. They are said by McCosh to have been most useful in dealing with disturbances amongst the Gāros during the early days of British rule.

the province had been much longer delayed, that it might not have been cleared of the enemy during the campaign, as the want of carriage and supplies would have detained the army some time at Rangpur and might have delayed its movements till the season was too far advanced to admit of its progress far beyond the Capital. By the occupation of Rangpur on the terms granted, much time was saved as well as some loss of life avoided; and the object of the campaign, the expulsion of the Burmese from Assam without the fear of their renewing their irruptions with any success, was peaceably and promptly secured. The persons that surrendered themselves by virtue of these stipulations were the Sām Phukan and about seven hundred of the garrison; the rest, about nine thousand of both sexes and all ages, including two thousand fighting men, withdrew to the frontiers; but many dropped off on the retreat and established themselves in Assam."

Final defeat of Burmese and their Singpho allies.

The surrender of Rangpur and the ejection of the Burmese terminated the regular campaign, but the state of anarchy into which the country had fallen and the lawless conduct of the frontier tribes still afforded plenty of employment for the British troops. The Singphos in particular were in urgent need of repression. During the Burmese occupation, they had made constant raids on the hapless Assamese, carrying off thousands as slaves and reducing the eastern part of the country to a state of almost complete depopulation. Their bands, estimated to number 7,500 men, shut up the Sadiya Khowā Gohāin within his stockades and attacked the Bar Senapati in his own territory. Both appealed to the British, who sent them help, whereupon the Singphos desisted from their attacks and entered into negotiations. At this juncture, in June, 1825, the Burmese, to the number of about six hundred, again appeared on the Pātkāi, and the Singphos made common cause with them. Captain Neufville at once led a party of the 57th Native Infantry up the Noa Dihing, and, by a series of gallant assaults, defeated the allies and expelled them from the Singpho villages around Bisā, which he destroyed. The Singphos then submitted, and the Burmese made their final exit from the country. In the course of these operations, Captain Neufville is said to have restored no less than six thousand Assamese captives to freedom.

The ease with which the Burmese had been ejected was no surprise to the officers on the spot, and, before the outbreak of hostilities, David Scott had written to the Government, saying that "their expulsion would be a matter of no difficulty, although the unhealthiness of the country would make its permanent occupation by us a matter of regret in some respects."*

Renewal of operations in Cachar.

Meanwhile fresh operations had been found necessary in Cachar, where the Burmese had been encouraged by the withdrawal of the main body of British troops to resume the offensive, and had occupied stockades at Talain, Dudpatli and Jātrāpur. In June, 1824, Colonel Innes with twelve hundred men took possession of Jātrāpur, but he was repulsed in an attempt to capture the Talain stockade. He then remained on the defensive, until the close of the rains.

A force of seven hundred men was now collected with the object of freeing Cachar and Manipur from the enemy and also, if possible, of making a demonstration against Ava from this direction. The Burmese had by this time evacuated Talain, where they had suffered much from disease. A track was cleared to Dudpatli. This place was occupied without opposition, and great efforts were made to carry a road through to Manipur, but serious obstacles were encountered in the shape of the mountainous character of the country, the clayey nature of the soil and the unusually heavy rainfall. Large numbers of elephants, bullocks and other transport animals were lost, and in the end the attempt was abandoned and the force was broken up.

Gambhir Singh drives Burmese from Manipur.

The primary object in view, *viz.*, the expulsion of the Burmese from Manipur was, however, achieved by Gambhir Singh, who had accompanied the troops with an irregular levy of five hundred Manipuris and Kachāris. These men had been provided with arms by the British commander, but they were wholly undisciplined, and it was only at Gambhir Singh's urgent request, that he was permitted to advance with them to Manipur. He left Sylhet on the 17th May accompanied by Lieutenant Pemberton, who had

* Despatch to Court of Directors, dated the 20th July, 1823.

volunteered for the expedition, and who was afterwards so well-known on this frontier. After a march of great difficulty and privation, often through torrents of rain, he emerged in the valley of Manipur on the 10th June. The Burmese thereupon retreated from the town of Imphāl and the adjoining villages to a place called Undra, about ten miles to the south. But here too they made no stand; and, as soon as the advance was continued, they again fled, and left the State altogether.

The inclemency of the season and the dearth of supplies made it impossible for the whole force to remain in Manipur; so Gambhir Singh returned with the bulk of his followers to Sylhet, leaving a small detachment to guard Manipur, aided by some of the inhabitants, whom he had provided with arms.

On the 4th December he again set out for Manipur, and reached the capital in a fortnight. There were no Burmese there, but a considerable number of them occupied a stockade at Tammu, in the south-east corner of the valley. He had no guns, and the casualties in a direct attack would probably have been very heavy. He avoided this by cutting off the water-supply, which compelled the Burmese to retreat, after they had made several ineffectual sallies. The capture of a second stockade on the bank of the Ningthi river freed the whole State from the presence of the Burmese. Here and elsewhere liberty was restored to large numbers of Manipuris who had been carried off by the Burmese as slaves.

Treaty of Yandabo.

Meanwhile the operations of the British arms in Burma itself had been crowned with success, and the king of Ava was at last reluctantly compelled to accept the terms of peace which were offered him. By the treaty of Yandabo, which was concluded on the 24th February, 1826, he agreed, amongst other things, to abstain from all interference in the affairs of the countries which now constitute the province of Assam, and to recognize Gambhir Singh as Raja of Manipur.

CHAPTER XV.

CONSOLIDATION OF BRITISH RULE.

Condition of the people after the expulsion of the Burmese.

THE condition of the Brahmaputra valley at the time of the expulsion of the Burmese was most deplorable. No less than thirty thousand Assamese had been taken away as slaves, and a well-known native authority was of opinion that the invaders, by their barbarous and inhuman conduct, had "destroyed more than one-half of the population, which had already been thinned by intestine commotions and repeated civil wars."* Those who survived had been so harassed by the long-continued wars and repeated acts of oppression that they had almost given up cultivation, and lived chiefly on jungle roots and plants; and famine and pestilence carried off thousands that had escaped the sword and captivity. The Ahom nobles and the great Gosāins, with few exceptions, had retired to Goālpāra, after losing the whole, or the bulk of, their property; and they were followed by large numbers of the common people. The former eventually returned to their homes, but the poorer refugees did not, and their descendants still form a large proportion of the inhabitants of the eastern part of Goālpāra.

Rendition of Manipur, Cachar and Jainti to native rulers.

The Burmese had now been finally ejected from Assam, but it still remained to be decided how the country which they had evacuated should be dealt with. Manipur was restored to Gambhir Singh, who had himself been the chief means of driving out the Burmese, and for this and other reasons was considered to have a better claim than either of his brothers. The Jaintia Raja, Rām Singh, was confirmed in his possessions, both in the hills and in the submontane tract on the north bank of the Surma river. Gobind Chandra was reinstated as Raja of Cachar. By a treaty executed at Badarpur on the 6th March, 1824, the last-mentioned prince acknowledged his allegiance to the East India Company and

* "Observations on the Administration of the Province of Assam," by Anandirām Dhekiāl Phukan, printed in Mill's Report.

agreed to pay a tribute of Rs. 10,000 a year, and to submit to the Company's arbitration in the case of disputes with other Rajas; on the other hand the Company undertook to protect him from external aggression, to leave him to manage his own internal affairs, and to make provision for the Manipuri princes who had lately occupied his country.

Brahmaputra valley taken under direct management.

The problem in the Brahmaputra valley was more difficult. Not only had the Burmese been in possession for several years, in the course of which they had overthrown most of the old administrative landmarks, but the people were split up into many conflicting parties, and the elevation of any particular pretender to the throne would have resulted, as soon as the British troops were withdrawn, in a renewal of the fatal dissensions and civil wars which had prevailed for so many years before the Burmese occupation. With the exception, therefore, of two tracts in Upper Assam, *viz.*, Sadiya and Matak, it was decided, for a time at least, to administer the country as a British province.

David Scott appointed Agent to the Governor-General.

Its management was entrusted, in November 1823, to David Scott who had been appointed Agent to the Governor-General for the whole eastern frontier from Cachar and Sylhet in the south to the Sikkim country in the north.* He was at the same time Special Civil Commissioner of North-East Rangpur, *i.e.*, Goālpāra and the Gāro Hills, and Judge of Circuit and Appeal in the Zilla of Sylhet; but in spite of this multiplicity of appointments, he was left to perform his new duties with a wholly inadequate staff. In Upper Assam he was relieved of the direct control of affairs by the appointment of an assistant. This post was filled, first by Colonel Cooper and afterwards, in 1828, by Captain Neufville, who had distinguished himself as Intelligence Officer during the Burmese war. The head-quarters of this officer were originally at Rangpur, near Sibsāgar, but were afterwards moved to Jorhāt. For the conduct of the administration in Lower Assam, David Scott was left absolutely single-handed until, after urgent and

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* Letter No. 1, dated 14th November, 1823, from the Secretary to the Government of India, to Mr. Scott.

repeated requests, Captain Adam White was deputed to help him.

The Assam Light Infantry.

Captain Neufville also commanded the Assam Light Infantry, a corps of about a thousand men, which had been raised in Cuttack in 1817, under the name of the Cuttack Legion, and was subsequently transferred to the Rangpur district of Bengal. After its permanent location in Assam, it consisted mainly of Hindustanis and Gurkhas, with a sprinkling of Manipuris and natives of the province.

The Matak country left under its own Chief.

It has already been mentioned that Matak and the country round Sadiya were excluded from the direct administrative control of the Agent to the Governor-General. The former tract, which lay to the south of Sadiya, in the angle between the Brahmaputra and the Burhi Dihing, and was chiefly inhabited by persons of the Moāmariā sect, was governed by a chief called the Bar Senapati, the son of the man who had been given that title by Purnānanda Burhā Gohāin. He had shown considerable ability as a ruler, and had protected his people during the Burmese occupation, alike from the predatory inroads of the Burmese* and from the raids of the Singphos, who, during this troublous period harried the other parts of the Ahom king's dominions as far west as Jorhāt. His capital was almost in the centre of his jurisdiction, at Rangagora on the Dibru river. This Chief was left in semi-independent possession of his country; and, in May 1826, he executed a treaty, in which it was provided that he should supply to Government two-thirds of the total number of his *pāiks*. This arrangement worked badly, and gave rise to much friction, which was increased by the encouragement which he gave to runaway *pāiks* to settle on his lands. It was therefore proposed by Government to substitute, in lieu of all other demands, a fixed tribute of Rs. 12,000 a year, or Rs. 2,000 more than he had paid under the Ahom Government. He objected strenuously to the payment of so large a sum, and at last succeeded in

* He employed a Burmese subject as the intermediary in his negotiations with the Ava authorities, and was always studious to avoid giving them any ground for complaint; but his immunity from attack was no doubt due, in a large measure, to the jungles which surrounded his territory and to its comparative poverty.

getting it reduced to Rs. 1,800, but only for the term of his own life. A new treaty was executed in January 1835, by which he undertook to pay this amount as tribute, and to supply, when required, a contingent of troops, for whose armament he was given ammunition and three hundred muskets. He derived his revenue from a poll-tax of three rupees per head in the case of Morāns and Kachāris, two rupees eight annas for *Bihis* or gold-washers, and two rupees for ordinary Assamese.

Sadiya under the Khāmtis,

We have seen how the Khāmtis, in 1794, overthrew the Ahom viceroy of Sadiya, known as the Sadiya Khowā Gohāin, and gave his name and jurisdiction to a chief of their own race. They were suppressed in Kamalesvar's reign, but rose to power again during the subsequent commotions. Their chief was now recognized by the British Government as the lawful ruler. He was not required to pay any tribute, but he agreed to maintain a force of two hundred men, who were provided by the Government with arms and ammunition, and were drilled for four months in the year by a native officer of the Assam Light Infantry, of which force from two to four companies were stationed at Sadiya, as a protection against the restless tribes inhabiting the surrounding hills. The internal management of the Khāmtis vested in their own chief, who also dealt with petty cases amongst the local Assamese and collected from them a poll-tax of one rupee a head. This they remitted to the Political Officer, who tried serious offences committed by the Assamese.

and Singphos under their own head-men.

The Singphos, who occupied the level tract of country extending eastwards from the Moāmariā borders across the Noā Dihing and Tengāpāni rivers, also made their submission. No revenue was demanded from them, but the Gām, or chief, of Bisa, was required to supply, if needed, a contingent of eighty men, and to give immediate information to the British authorities of anything calculated to excite apprehension that might occur in the vicinity of the Pātkai pass. This was the route traversed by the Ahoms when they first found their way to Assam, and also by the more recent Burmese invaders.

Administration of British portion of Brahmaputra valley.

It was not to be expected that David Scott, with his multifarious duties and inadequate staff of Assistants, would be able to effect many reforms in the administration of those parts of the Brahmaputra valley which remained under his direct management; nor, indeed, so long as the question of permanent control remained undecided, was this expected or desired. He was most persistent in his efforts to correct the worst abuses, such as the widespread institution of slavery; but his energies, and those of his assistants, were, in the main, directed to the assessment and collection of the revenue.

Disposal of civil and criminal work.

The ordinary criminal and civil duties were performed by councils of the local gentry, designated *panchāyats,* of which there were some half dozen. More heinous cases were tried, with the assistance of a *panchāyat,* by the Commissioner's Assistants, who also disposed of appeals from the *panchāyats*, and from whose decisions, both appellate and original, a further appeal lay to the Commissioner himself.

Revenue administration.

In regard to the revenue administration, it was thought inadvisable to make any radical change until the ultimate destiny of the country had been settled. The only important alteration adopted was the imposition of a poll-tax of three rupees per *pāik* in lieu of the old liability to personal service for three or four months in the year. The duty of collecting this tax was entrusted to the old staff of *khel* officials, but the *pāiks* of the different *khels* had become so scattered during the recent disturbances that this method of realizing the Government dues was found most tedious and uncertain, and the amounts which were eventually paid into the treasury were ridiculously small. The method of collection was therefore changed from a personal, to a territorial, basis. The whole area of a district was parcelled out into blocks called *mauzas** or *mahāls*, and the

* The Assam *mauza* of the present day is a very different thing from the territorial village, or revenue unit of area, which is the meaning attached to the term in Bengal. Originally it had that meaning in Assam also, but it soon came to be used primarily with reference to the area in charge of a *mauzādār,* or revenue collector;

dues realizable from all persons resident in a given *mauza* were collected by the officer in charge of it, who was variously known as the *mauzādār, bishayā, chaudhuri, kāgoti* or *pātgiri*. The poll-tax was soon abandoned in favour of a regular assessment of the land, based on actual measurement. To carry out the arrangements which these changes involved, Captains Mathie, Rutherford and Bogle were appointed "Principal Assistants," or Collectors, of Darrang, Nowgong and Kāmrup. The cultivated area was divided into *basti*, or homestead; *rupit*, or land on which the transplanted rice called *sāli* is grown; *bāo-toli*, or land growing *bāo* rice; and *faringati*, or land growing dry crops, such as mustard, and *āhu* rice.* For a time, the homestead lands were assessed at so much a house, the amount varying in Kāmrup from Rs. 3 to Re. 1-8-0 according to the circumstances of the occupants. The *rupit* lands in the same district were originally assessed at one rupee per *pura*, the *bāo-toli* at twelve annas, and the *faringati* at four annas. These rates were gradually raised, and in 1848 they had reached Re. 1-4-0 per *pura* for *rupit*, and one rupee for all other kinds of land, including *basti*.

The rates differed slightly in other districts, and the change from the old manner of assessment to the new took much longer to effect in some parts than it did in others. In the north of Darrang the indigenous *khelwāri* system lingered on until 1841, when a plough tax of three rupees was levied; a regular land assessment was first introduced there in 1843.

For the first few years annual settlements of the land revenue were effected, but subsequently the plan was tried

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and, as it was found advisable, for many reasons, gradually to reduce the number of *mauzādārs*, by increasing the areas assigned to each, the *mauza* came to include more and more villages, so that at the present day it often contains twenty or thirty, or even more.

* *Rupit* is, of course, derived from *rupan*, to plough. The origin of the word *faringati* is unknown. Possibly it comes from *farkhaiti*, an acquittance, or rent receipt. This was the only class of land which in former times was always held subject to the payment of rent.

of settling for a term of years with the *mauzādār*, who took upon himself all the risks of loss, while, on the other hand, he enjoyed the additional rents which accrued from extended cultivation. By 1854, however, annual settlements had again been reverted to.

The revenue of Kāmrup, Darrang and Nowgong under the *khelwāri* system amounted in 1832-33 to Rs. 1,10,181, Rs. 41,506 and Rs. 31,509 respectively. Ten years later, the land revenue, which replaced it, amounted to Rs. 2,52,991 in Kāmrup, Rs. 1,35,454 in Darrang, Rs. 1,10,314 in Nowgong, Rs. 80,843 in Sibsāgar, and Rs. 34,730 in Lakhimpur, or to a total for Assam proper of Rs. 6,14,332. A decade later, this had risen to Rs. 7,43,689.

Death of David Scott.

The arrangements for the introduction of this improved method of assessing the land revenue had been initiated by David Scott, but before they could be completed, his unremitting labours in a relaxing climate had proved too much for an already enfeebled physique, and he breathed his last in August 1831. He was deeply regretted by the natives of the province, for the amelioration of whose lot he had always been most solicitous. He was buried at Cherrapunji and his tomb bears the following inscription:—

IN MEMORY

of David Scott, Agent to the Governor-General of the North-East Frontier of Bengal, and Commissioner of Revenue and Circuit in the District of Assam, North-Eastern part of Rangpur, Sherpur and Sylhet. Died 20th August 1831, aged 45 years and 3 months. This monument is erected by order of the Supreme Government as a public and lasting record of its consideration for the personal character of the deceased and of its estimation of the eminent services rendered by him in the administration of the extensive territory committed to his charge. By his demise the Government has been deprived of a most zealous, able and intelligent servant whose loss it deeply laments, while his name will long be held in grateful remembrance and veneration by the native population, to whom he was justly endeared by his impartial dispensation of justice, his kind and conciliatory manners and his constant and unwearied endeavours to promote their happiness and welfare.

The late Sir Alexander Mackenzie, in his *North-Eastern Frontier of Bengal,* penned the following eulogy on this able and devoted officer:—

> The name and fame of David Scott are still green on the North-East Frontier. He was one of those remarkable men who have from time to time been the ornament of our Indian services. Had the scene of his labours been in North-West or Central India, where the great problem of Empire was then being worked out, he would occupy a place in history by the side of Malcolm, Elphinstone and Metcalfe.

Purandar Singh is made Raja of Upper Assam.

Meanwhile the question of restoring the other parts of the Brahmaputra valley to native rule continued to be discussed. It was recognized that it would not be right to withdraw the British troops altogether, as this would be certain to lead to a revival of the internecine disturbances which had previously brought the country to the verge of ruin. But, on the other hand, it was not desired to resort to permanent annexation, if any other alternative could be found. It was, therefore, decided to follow a middle course, *i.e.*, to instal a native ruler in one part of the province, and to retain the other part as a means of providing the revenue required for the maintenance of an adequate British garrison.

It remained to settle what portion should be retained and what restored, and to whom restoration should be made. David Scott was at first in favour of establishing a native Government in Central Assam, but this proposal was not viewed with favour by the higher authorities, who did not, in this case, see how to deal with the territory lying to the east of the proposed State. At the time of his death, Scott had matured an alternative project for reinstating Purandar Singh in the country east of the Dhansiri river. This plan was recommended to Government by his successor Mr. T. C. Robertson, who subsequently became Deputy Governor of Bengal; and, early in 1833, the whole of Upper Assam, except Sadiya and Matak, was formally made over to that prince. In his report to Government Mr. Robertson wrote as follows regarding Purandar Singh's qualifications:—" I have had several interviews with Purandar Singh at Gauhāti, and see no reason, from his outward appearance and manners,

to doubt of his fitness for the dignity, for which all unite in preferring him to his only rival Chandrakānt. Purandar Singh is a young man, apparently about 25 years of age. His countenance is pleasing and his manners extremely good. His natural abilities seem respectable and his disposition mild and pacific. . . . Major White and Lieutenants Mathie and Rutherford are all decidedly of opinion that Purandar Singh is the person best fitted to be at the head of the State which it has been decided to create."*

By a treaty entered into with him at the time of his installation, Purandar Singh was placed on the same footing as other protected princes; the entire civil administration was left in his hands, and his territory was secured from the attacks of hostile States on condition of his paying a yearly tribute of Rs. 50,000† out of an estimated revenue of Rs. 1,20,000. The British Government still maintained direct political relations with the Chiefs of Matak and Sadiya, and with the surrounding hill tribes, and continued to keep a garrison and a Political Officer at Sadiya. Jorhāt was made the capital of the new State, and the headquarters of the Political Agent and of the Assam Light Infantry were transferred from that place to Bishnāth. A detachment of the latter was left at Jorhāt for the protection of the Raja and the preservation of peace.

Formation of districts in rest of Brahmaputra valley.

In 1834 Mr. Robertson was succeeded as Commissioner and Agent to the Governor-General by Captain, afterwards General, Jenkins. At this period the British portion of the valley was divided into four districts, *viz.*, Goālpāra, Kāmrup, Darrang, including Bishnāth, and Nowgong.

The capital of the last-mentioned district, which extended as far east as the Dhansiri, and was often called Khāgarijān in the early records, was originally at Nowgong. It was removed in 1834 to Rangagora, and subsequently to Purāni Gudām, whence it was eventually re-transferred to Nowgong.

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* Political Proceedings of the Government of Bengal, dated 4th February, 1833, Nos. 123—4.

† In 1822, when a fugitive from the Burmese, he had offered to pay a tribute of Rs. 3,00,000 if reinstated in the whole of his ancestral kingdom, and in addition to repay all the expenses connected with the expulsion of the Burmese.

Kāmrup included the country along both banks of the Brahmaputra, from the Monās in the west to the Bar Nadi in the east; its capital was at Gauhāti which was also the headquarters of the Commissioner of Assam. The Darrang district takes its name from the western part, which was formerly under the rule of the Darrang Rajas, and the officer in charge was at first stationed at Mangaldai. But this place was found unsuitable in several ways; it was unhealthy and liable to inundation, and the encroachments of the river were at one time so great that it seemed in danger of being washed away; it was accordingly abandoned, in 1835, in favour of Purāpur, or Tezpur, which is in every way a far better site.

Goālpāra, including the Gāro hills but excluding the Eastern Duārs, was originally administered from Rangpur and, as such, formed part of the province of Bengal which, by the Mughal Emperor's *farmān* of the 12th August 1765, was transferred to the East India Company. Under the provisions of Regulation X of 1822 it was cut off from Rangpur and formed into a separate district with headquarters at Goālpāra. When David Scott was entrusted with the administration of the tract taken from the Burmese, he was already in charge of Goālpāra, and from that time this district was treated as part of the ordinary jurisdiction of the Commissioner of Assam. In 1867, when the Bengal Commissionership of Koch Bihār was formed, it, with the newly acquired "Eastern Duārs," was included in that Commissionership. In the following year the judicial administration was restored to the Judicial Commissioner of Assam, but the executive control remained with the Commissioner of Koch Bihār until the formation of the Chief Commissionership of Assam in 1874. As will be seen further on, the Gāro hills were constituted a separate district in 1869. When the daily mail steamer service was inaugurated, about a dozen years later, the headquarters of the Goālpāra district were removed to Dhubri, which was made the steamer terminus.

The legal position. The legal position of these four districts was defined by Act II of 1835, which placed all functionaries employed in

them under the control and superintendence of the Sadar Court in civil and criminal cases, and of the Bengal Board of Revenue in revenue matters; and further declared that the superintendence of these authorities should be exercised in conformity with such instructions as might be issued by the Government of Bengal. When the semi-independent tracts in Upper Assam were resumed, a few years later, the provisions of this Act were extended to them also. In 1837 a set of rules, known as the Assam Code, was drawn up for the regulation of procedure in civil and criminal cases. No special instructions were laid down for the conduct of revenue business, but the local officers were directed to conform as nearly as circumstances would permit to the provisions of the Bengal Regulations.

Population.

In 1835 the population of the entire valley was estimated to be 799,519, *viz.*, Native States in Upper Assam 220,000, Darrang 89,519, Nowgong 90,000, Kāmrup 300,000 and Goālpāra 100,000. Except in the case of Goālpāra, for which a rough estimate was made, these figures appear to have been taken from the official returns prepared in connection with the assessment of the land revenue. It would not be safe to place much reliance on them.

Means of communication.

Something had already been done to improve communications, but they were still very bad. The Calcutta post was carried to Goālpāra overland, *viâ* Murshidabad, Malda, Dinājpur and Rangpur. This route was almost impassable in the rains, and ordinary travellers at all seasons went by water. The journey down stream from Goālpāra to Calcutta occupied from twenty-five to thirty days, and that in the opposite direction about eight days more. The upward journey was even more tedious in the case of large craft. Captain Wilcox in the Appendix to his Memoir in the 17th volume of the *Asiatic Researches*, says:—"When coming down the river in the latter end of October 1825, I saw a fleet of commissariat boats (at that time very much required with their supplies for the army) which had been twenty-five days between Goālpāra and Nāgarbera hill a distance of thirty miles, and there was no remarkable wind to impede their progress."

Trade.

In spite of this, a number of enterprising Mārwāri merchants had already established themselves in the province, and four of them were engaged in business at Sadiya. The trade of the province had been considerable, even in 1809, when the imports from Bengal were estimated to amount to two-and-a-quarter, and the exports to that province to one-and-a-third, lakhs of rupees. In 1834 the imports were valued at about two-and-a-half, and the exports, at a little more than three, lakhs. The last-mentioned figures were returned from the custom house at Hādira opposite Goālpāra, where all imports and exports, except grain, paid a duty of ten per cent. or thereabouts, according to the terms of a commercial treaty executed with Gaurināth Singh by Captain Welsh on behalf of the East India Company in 1793.

The imports included 31,222 maunds of salt valued at Rs. 1,40,502, and the exports, 162,704 maunds of mustard seed, valued at one rupee per maund, and 224 maunds of *muga* silk thread, the value of which was placed at Rs. 53,889. In 1835 the custom house was abolished, and all transit dues were remitted.

Formation of a Sebundy regiment.

About the same time a Sebundy regiment of eight companies was raised, and the strength of the Assam Light Infantry was reduced from twelve to ten companies. Gauhāti was the headquarters of the new force, which was composed mainly of Rābhas, Kachāris and other kindred tribes. Sebundies were irregular foot soldiers, who, in pre-British times, constituted the armed force which always accompanied the tax gatherers. They were also employed on police duties. The main object in raising this force was to protect the people of Lower Assam against raids by the Bhutias and other tribes; and, in the cold weather, outposts were occupied by it at Udalguri and other points along the frontier. The control exercised from headquarters over these isolated garrisons was not always as close as it should have been; and the Principal Assistant of Darrang, writing in 1853, complained that the conduct of the men on outpost duty was most objectionable. They were, he said, regarded by the people "as oppressors worse dreaded than the

Bhutias, rapacious, insolent and tyrannical, abusing men from the highest to the lowest rank unless their most trifling wants are satisfied."

The Sylhet Light Infantry.

It may be mentioned here that the defence of the Surma valley was entrusted to a force called the Sylhet Local Battalion, afterwards the Sylhet Light Infantry, with headquarters at Sylhet. It was raised in 1824, and was recruited chiefly from Manipuris who had left their own country and settled in Sylhet and Cachar during the internal troubles and frequent Burmese invasions of the first quarter of the last century. Two companies of this regiment were stationed at Silchar, and at a later date it also occupied Cherrapunji.

Material condition of the people.

The introduction of peace and settled Government soon led to a marked improvement in the condition of the cultivating classes, which was described a few years later as one "of great comfort both as regards living and clothing." That of the aristocracy, on the other hand, had seriously deteriorated. Their slaves had been emancipated, and they had lost the services of their *liksus*, or the *pāiks* formerly assigned to them; and, being no longer able to cultivate their estates, they had either thrown them up, or allowed them to be sold for arrears of revenue, or for debt. Some members of the late ruling family were in receipt of pensions from the British Government, and some other persons, *e.g.*, members of the Darrang Raja's family, held land, granted to them by former rulers, either rent-free or at half rates. But, with these exceptions, the quondam nobles found themselves deprived of their old sources of livelihood, and had either to content themselves with small appointments under the British Government or to sink to the level of ordinary cultivators.

Military operations in the Khāsi hills.

While the settlement and development of the new province were still engrossing the attention of the local officers, they found themselves engaged in hostilities with the Khāsis, a group of small independent communities of the same race as the hillmen of Jaintia, who occupied the tract of country between the Jaintia hills on the east and the Gāro hills on the west.

As soon as the Brahmaputra valley had passed under British rule, the shrewd mind of David Scott had been impressed by the expediency of opening direct communication between it and the valley of the Surma; and in 1827 he had an interview at Nungklow with Tirat Singh, the Siem of that place, and other Khāsi chiefs, at which they unanimously gave their consent to the construction of a road from Rāni, *viâ* Nungklow, to the Surma valley. The project was at once put in hand; a track was cleared, and bungalows were erected at Nungklow. The officers employed on the work mixed freely with the tribesmen, and for eighteen months the greatest apparent cordiality prevailed. But, in April 1829, the Khāsis, alarmed by the foolish boast of a Bengali peon, who, in a quarrel, taunted them with the prospect of subjugation and taxation as soon as the road should be completed, made a sudden attack on the small party. Lieutenant Bedingfield, one of the two officers at Nungklow, was enticed to a conference and massacred; the other, Lieutenant Burlton, defended himself all day against greatly superior numbers, and at night fled some way towards Gauhāti. He was overtaken and put to death with most of his followers, of whom only a small remnant escaped to British territory. David Scott himself had a very narrow escape, having left Nungklow for Cherrapunji only a short time before the rising.

Troops were immediately called up from Sylhet and Kāmrup, and vigorous reprisals were undertaken. The hillmen, favoured by the difficult character of their country, offered a stout, though desultory, resistance. They brought off several counter-raids in the plains, but were gradually overborne; and, after suffering frequent defeats, one chief after another made his submission. On the 9th January 1833 the ringleader, Tirat Singh, surrendered himself, and a general pacification followed almost immediately. The chiefs were allowed to retain a large measure of independence; but they had to submit to the general control of a Political Agent, who was thenceforth stationed in the hills and dealt with all serious cases of a criminal nature. They had also to agree to the construction of such roads,

bridges and roadside bungalows as might be considered necessary. The first Political Agent was Captain Lister, of the Sylhet Light Infantry, who held the post for more than twenty years.

Description of Khāsi States.

There are in all twenty-five petty States in the Khāsi hills. Fifteen are presided over by Siems who, though taken always from one family, are chosen by popular election; one is a confederacy under elected officers styled Wāhādadārs; five are under Sardārs, and four under Lyngdohs, both of which offices are entirely elective. The election, however, is subject to ratification by the British Government, and the new chief is required on investiture to confirm the cession to the paramount power of the minerals, elephants, forests and other natural products of his state, on the condition of receiving half the profits accruing from these sources.

The States of Cherra, Khairam, Nongstain, Lyngrin and Nongpung were originally classed as semi-independent, having always been friendly, or never having been actually coerced by a British force; but in practice no real distinction has ever been made between their position and that of the dependent States.

Establishment of a sanitarium in the hills.

The advantages to be gained from a sanitarium in the hills had already been recognized. David Scott had favoured Nungklow, but that place was found to be unhealthy and liable to mists. Some advocated the claims of Mairang, while others preferred the tableland between the Shillong Peak and Nongkrem, and others again a site near Serrarim. The decision was eventually given in favour of Cherrapunji, mainly on the score of its accessibility from Sylhet. In 1864 this place was abandoned for Shillong. The native name for the site of this town is Yeddo, but there is another place of this name in Japan, and its founders preferred, therefore, to call it Shillong, after the peak which dominates it.

Annexation of Cachar.

In Cachar the hapless Gobind Chandra soon found himself involved in a sea of difficulties. In spite of every effort to expel him, Tulārām remained in possession of the hills. The latter was now growing old, and, in 1828, he entrusted the command of his troops to his cousin Gobind

Rām, who, after defeating Gobind Chandra's levies, abused the trust reposed in him and turned his arms against his patron. Tulārām fled to Jaintia, but in July 1829, with the aid of a Manipuri detachment, lent by Gambhir Singh, he ousted his ungrateful cousin, who in his turn fled to Dharampur and entered into an alliance with Gobind Chandra. At this stage David Scott induced the Kachāri Raja to recognize Tulārām as the ruler of a considerable tract of country in the hills. In spite of this, he soon afterwards instigated three separate attacks on him, but the Commissioner caused the persons concerned to be apprehended and confined, and thus put a stop to further attempts of the kind. In the rest of Gobind Chandra's domain, there was no overt opposition to his rule, but he was equally unfortunate in other ways. During the troubled period which followed the death of Krishna Chandra, the Kukis had made constant raids, and the south of the district had in parts relapsed into jungle; while the depredations committed by the Burmese had left the rest of the country in a state of hopeless destitution. The Raja, however, was no sooner restored to the throne than he commenced a series of unsparing exactions on his own people. He almost killed the trade between Manipur and Sylhet by imposing the heaviest transit dues on all articles of merchandise. He behaved most tyrannically towards the Manipuris who had settled in his territory. His tribute also fell into arrears. It would have been impossible to allow this state of things to go on indefinitely, but in 1830, before matters had reached a climax, he died at the hands of a Manipuri assassin. He had no descendants, either lineal or adopted, and the country was annexed by a proclamation dated the 14th August 1832, "in compliance," says Pemberton, writing three years later, "with the frequent and earnestly expressed wishes of the people."

Tulārām Senapati's country.

Tulārām had laid claim to the vacant Rāj, alleging that he was the descendant of an ancient line of princes, anterior to that to which the late ruler had belonged, but his pretensions were proved to be groundless and were summarily rejected. He was, however, confirmed in the possession of

the greater part of the tract assigned to him by Gobind Chandra, which was bounded on the south by the Mahur river and the Nāga hills, on the west by the Doyang, on the east by the Dhansiri, and on the north by the Jamuna and Doyang. He agreed to pay a yearly tribute of four elephants' tusks, each weighing seventy pounds, but this was afterwards commuted to a money payment of Rs. 490. On the other hand, he was granted for life a pension of fifty rupees a month. He was not given the title of Raja, nor was he permitted to deal with criminal matters, other than those of a trivial nature; all serious offences were tried by the officer in charge of the Nowgong district.

Arrangements for administration of Cachar.

On the annexation of Cachar, it was formed into a district with headquarters at Silchar, and was placed in charge of a Superintendent, who was subordinate to the Commissioner of Assam. In 1836 it was transferred to the Dacca division, and the title of the officer in charge was subsequently changed to Deputy Commissioner. By Act V of 1835, Cachar, like the Brahmaputra valley, was placed under the jurisdiction of the High Court of Bengal in civil and criminal matters, and under that of the Board of Revenue in respect of the revenue administration. The first Superintendent was Captain Fisher, of the Survey Department, who was described by Pemberton as "an officer of approved ability and great local experience." His first care was to cope with the irruptions of the Kukis. This he did by the expedient of settling along the frontier as many Manipuris as possible, who, when supplied with a few firearms, easily kept off the Kukis, and so protected, not only themselves, but also the less warlike plainsmen behind them.

The advent of good Government soon wrought a remarkable change in the state of this district, and Pemberton, writing in 1835, says:—

"On both banks of the Surma from Badarpur to Bānskāndi villages have been established and the plains which, six or seven years ago, were wholly deserted and covered with reeds, now present a scene of newly-awakened industry and a broad belt of as fine and varied cultivation as can be found in any part of Bengal."

At that time the old name, Hidimba or Hiramba, was still in common use, and it appears, instead of the more modern designation of Cachar, on a seal used by the Superintendent in 1835.

Annexation of Jaintia.

During the unsettled conditions which prevailed for some time after the Burmese war, the Raja of Jaintia encroached considerably on the southern border of the Nowgong district; and between 1830 and 1832 he was repeatedly called upon to remove an outpost which he had established without authority at Chappar Mukh, at the confluence of the Kopili and Doyang rivers. He evaded compliance, but before any coercive measures had been taken a fresh cause of dispute arose. In 1832 the Raja of Gobha, in the west of Nowgong, one of the petty chieftains dependent on Jaintia, acting under the orders of his suzerain, seized four British subjects, three of whom were afterwards immolated at the shrine of the Goddess Kāli. The fourth escaped and gave information of the occurrence. At this juncture Raja Rām Singh died, and was succeeded by his nephew, Rājendra Singh. For two years the Government endeavoured to induce him to give up the perpetrators of the outrage, and reminded him of the consequences of refusal, and of the solemn warnings which had been given on previous occasions when similar attempts had been made on the lives of British subjects in the district of Sylhet. The young Raja, however, was obdurate, and at last, failing to obtain satisfaction, it was resolved to dispossess him of his territory in the plains.

On the 15th March 1835, Captain Lister with two companies of the Sylhet Light Infantry, took formal possession of Jaintiapur and issued a proclamation announcing the annexation of the Jaintia parganas to British territory. A few weeks later Gobha, in the Nowgong district, was similarly taken over by a detachment of the Assam Light Infantry. The only income derived by the Raja from his possession in the hills was one he-goat yearly from each village, with a small quantity of parched rice and firewood for his annual religious ceremonies; the villagers were also bound to cultivate the crown lands. On his territory in the plains being annexed, the Raja professed

himself unwilling to retain that in the hills, and so this also passed into the hands of the British. It was placed under the Political Officer of the Khāsi hills and the direct management was vested in an Assistant who was stationed at Jowai. The hillmen, or Syntengs, were interfered with as little as possible; no revenue was demanded from them and, although heinous offences were tried by the Political Agent or his Assistant, petty cases, both civil and criminal, were dealt with by the local headmen, of whom there were nineteen in all, *viz.*, fifteen *dolois* and four *sardārs*. Act VI of 1835 was passed to provide for the judicial control of the Khāsi and Jaintia hills.

The deposed Raja accepted a pension of Rs. 500 a month and retired to Sylhet, where the whole of his personal property, valued at more than a lakh-and-a-half of rupees, was made over to him.

Condition of people in Jaintia parganas in 1835.

At the time of the annexation of the Jaintia parganas there was a considerable trade in cotton, iron ore, wax, ivory and other articles, which were brought down from the hills and exchanged for salt, tobacco, rice and goats, but business was much restricted by injudicious monopolies and heavy transit dues. Moreover, very little money was in circulation, and nearly all transactions were by means of barter; "the labourer mostly satisfied the demand against him with labour and the producer with produce." All rents were paid in kind, and one of the difficulties experienced by the early British administrators of the tract lay in the substitution of money for produce rents. Under the native administration it had been the custom to remunerate the official staff by grants of service lands. Civil suits and criminal cases were referred to a *mantri* or other official, who after hearing the parties and their witnesses, made a verbal report to the Raja. The latter, on all important occasions, was under the necessity of consulting the Queen Mother, the officers of state and the *dolois*, or chiefs of districts. In appointing the latter he had to consider the wishes of the people, who were of a very independent and rather turbulent disposition.*

* This account is taken from a Report by the Commissioner of Dacca, made in the year 1835.

Annexation of Purandar Singh's dominions,

We have seen that in the beginning of 1832 Purandar Singh was put in possession of the whole of Upper Assam, except Matak and Sadiya, on condition of his paying a yearly tribute of half a lakh of rupees. In less than three years he began to make default in his payments and begged for a considerable reduction in the amount which he had agreed to pay. Enquiry showed that, owing to mismanagement and the general system of corruption which he apparently encouraged, his revenues had fallen to such an extent that he would soon be incapable of paying even one-half of the stipulated amount. His subjects were oppressed and misgoverned, and his rule was very distasteful to the bulk of the population.* His administration having proved a failure in all respects, he was deposed and pensioned, in October 1838, and his territories were placed once more under the direct administration of British officers. They were formed into two districts *viz.*, Sibpur or Sibsāgar (so-called from the place selected as the district headquarters) which included the tract south of the old course of the Brahmaputra, and Lakhimpur, or the part north of the same river. The formal proclamation giving effect to these arrangements was issued in 1839.†

McCosh, writing a year previously gives the following description of this parody on royalty:—

> "The present representative of this once powerful dynasty (Svargadeo or Lord of Heaven, as he is pleased to call himself) now resides at Jorhāt in noisy pomp and tawdry splendour; his resources limited to that of a zamindar; his numerous nobility reduced to beggary or to exist upon bribery and corruption; and his kingly court (for he still maintains his regal dignity) more resembling the parade of a company of strolling players than anything imposing or sovereign."

and of Sadiya.

The old Sadiya Khowa Gohāin died in 1835 and was succeeded by his son. About the same time there was a fresh immigration of Khāmtis from beyond the border.

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* Report by Captain Fisher quoted in Pemberton's "Eastern Frontier," page 220.

† In 1853 the pensions payable to various Ahom noble families still exceeded Rs. 12,000 a month.

Their advent was welcomed by the British authorities, who still regarded a fresh Burmese invasion as possible, and whose policy it was to impede it by the settlement of friendly warlike tribes along the route which they would have to follow. A dispute arose between the new Sadiya Khowa Gohāin and the Bar Senapati regarding a certain tract of land. The British officer at Sadiya, to prevent a collision, attached it and told the disputants to appear before him and urge their respective claims. The Sadiya Khowa Gohāin, in defiance of this order, took forcible possession and refused to give it up when called upon to do so. His post was accordingly abolished, and he was removed to another part of the province. The Khāmtis themselves were left untaxed, and were still allowed to manage their private affairs under their own chiefs. But they were deprived of their control over the local Assamese, the jurisdiction over whom was thenceforth exercised by the Political Officer at Sadiya. Their slaves were also released, and they suspected the Government of a design to tax them and to lower their status to that of the ordinary Assamese. Thus, although they shortly afterwards assisted in the operations against the Singphos, as a reward for which their late chief was permitted to return from exile, they remained thenceforth in a state of simmering discontent. In January 1839, this culminated in a treacherous night attack on the British garrison at Sadiya. Colonel White, the Political Agent, was killed, and eighty others were killed or wounded. A punitive force was at once despatched to Sadiya. The insurgents sought refuge amongst the Mishmis. They were followed up and repeated defeats were inflicted on them; and in December 1843, the last of the rebels made his submission. Some were deported to Nārāyanpur, on the Dikrāng, in the western part of the district, and others were settled above Sadiya town to form a screen between the Assamese and the Mishmis.

and of the Matak country.

The Bar Senapati, or chief of the Matak country, after nominating his second son, known as the Māju Gohāin, to succeed him, died in 1839. The specially favourable arrangements sanctioned by the British Government for the

term of his own life only thus came to an end. It was proposed to resume a portion of the tract, the inhabitants of which had asked to be placed under British rule, and, in the remaining portion, to take a fresh count of the population, and to fix the Government share of the revenue according to the scale originally proposed by David Scott. These terms were rejected by the Māju Gohāin; they were then offered to other members of his family, who also refused to accept them, whereupon the British representative, Captain Vetch, assumed direct management of the entire country. This measure was subsequently approved by the Governor-General. Pensions aggregating seven thousand rupees a year, or considerably more than half the total revenue of the estate, were awarded to the late Senapati's family, and several members of it were given appointments under Government.

In 1842 a proclamation was issued announcing the incorporation of Matak and Sadiya in British territory. Both tracts were added to the Lakhimpur district, the headquarters of which were transferred to Dibrugarh in the Matak country. From this time the Principal Assistant at Dibrugarh or, as we should now call him, the Deputy Commissioner, has generally performed the duties of Political Agent,* with the help, since 1882, of an Assistant Political Officer stationed at Sadiya.

Formation of a second Sebundy regiment.

A second Sebundy regiment of six companies, consisting partly of Rābhas and Kachāris from Lower Assam and partly of Doāniyas, or Singpho half-breeds, and other local men of low caste, was raised for the defence of the newly-acquired territory. Its headquarters were at Rangpur, and it occupied the outposts on the Matak frontier.

Subsequent history of Assam regiments.

There were now three regiments in the Brahmaputra valley; the Assam Light Infantry with headquarters at Sibsāgar; and the two Sebundy corps, which were stationed

* On one occasion at least the duties of Political Agent were discharged by another officer; and Major Vetch, after his transfer from Lakhimpur to Kāmrup, continued for some years to be the Political Agent for Sadiya. This anomalous arrangement was criticized by Mill in his well-known report of 1854.

at Gauhāti and Rangpur respectively. The last-mentioned was disbanded in 1844. In the same year, the Lower Assam Sebundy corps was transferred into a regular regiment, known as the 2nd Assam, or Kāmrup, Light Infantry, and later as the 43rd Gurkha Rifles. The 1st Assam Light Infantry, which was afterwards moved to Dibrugarh, developed into the 42nd Gurkha Rifles, and the Sylhet Light Infantry became the 44th; according to the recent renumbering of the regiments of the Indian Army, the 42nd, 43rd and 44th regiments have become respectively the 6th, 7th and 8th Gurkha Rifles.

Annexation of Tulārām Senapati's country.

In 1844 the Government of India sanctioned an application by Tulārām Senapati, who died soon afterwards, to transfer the management of his estate of his two sons, Nokul Rām Barman and Brijnāth Barman. They were, however, quite unequal to the task. They quarrelled among themselves, became involved in debt and incurred the enmity of the Angāmi Nāgas, who made frequent raids on the Kachāri villages, which the new managers were unable to prevent. In one of these raids eighty-six persons were killed and many more were carried off as slaves. At last, in 1854, the tract was resumed and added to the North Cachar sub-division, the headquarters of which was then at Asalu, and which, since 1839, had been included in the Nowgong district. When the Nāga hills district was constituted in 1866, this sub-division was closed and the territory included in it was distributed amongst the surrounding districts. It was re-established in 1880 and placed in charge of a junior police officer, who was stationed, first at Gunjong and subsequently at Haflong. Liberal pensions were given to the surviving members of Tulārām's family.

Recovery of the Duārs bordering on Bhutān and Tibet.

The strip of level country at the foot of the Himalayas, from Darrang westwards, is divided off in native parlance into a series of Duārs, or "doors," through which access is gained to the various passes into the hills. In the direction of Bhutān there were eighteen of these Duārs, eleven on the frontier of Bengal and Goālpāra, and seven, with an area of sixteen hundred square miles, in the north of Kāmrup and

Darrang. The former had been annexed by the Bhutias long before the British came into possession of Bengal, but the latter were held by the Ahoms until Gaurināth's reign, when they were surrendered to the Bhutias in consideration of an annual tribute of Rs. 4,785. It was agreed that, so long as this sum was paid, the Kāmrup Duārs were to remain permanently with the Bhutias, while those in Darrang were to be managed jointly, the Ahoms holding them from July to November, and the Bhutias, for the remaining seven months of the year. After the British conquest, the tribute due by the Bhutias gradually fell into arrears, and frequent outrages and dacoities were committed in British territory. Various punitive measures were taken, but without lasting result. It was therefore decided, in 1841, to take over the whole of this section of the Duārs, and a yearly payment of Rs. 10,000, or one-third of the estimated revenue at the time, was paid to the Bhutān authorities in their stead. This sum was subsequently merged in one of Rs. 25,000, which was sanctioned after the Bhutān War of 1864, when the Duārs north of Goālpāra and Koch Bihār were also annexed. Payment is now made to the Bhutān representatives by the Commissioner of Rajshahi at Buxa. East of the Bhutān Duārs of Darrang is another, known as the Koriāpāra Duār, which was held by certain Bhutia chiefs called Sāt Rajas, whose hills form part of the province of Towāng, an outlying dependency of Lhassa. Here also, there were numerous outrages and disputes until 1843, when the local chiefs ceded the Duār in return for an annual payment of Rs. 5,000, or one-third of the supposed revenue, which is handed over to them every year at the time of the Udalguri fair.

Commutation of blackmail levied by Akas and Daflas.

The same weakness of the central administration which had led to the abandonment of the above Duārs resulted further east in the acknowledgment of the right of certain small tribes of independent Bhutias, and of the Aka and Dafla hillmen, to levy *posa,* or tribute, in certain villages along the foot of their hills. The Hazārikhowa Akas were thus permitted to levy from each house "one portion of a female dress, one bundle of cotton thread and one cotton

handkerchief," and the rights of the other tribes were similarly defined. The inconvenience of permitting these savages to descend annually upon the cultivated lands, for the purpose of collecting their dues, was very soon felt to be unbearable, and every effort was made to induce them to commute their claims for a fixed money payment. This was eventually done. At the present time a sum of Rs. 1,740 is paid annually to the Bhutias of Chār Duār; Rs. 146 to the Thebengia Bhutias; Rs. 700 to the Akas; Rs. 4,130 to the Daflas; and Rs. 1,118 to the Miris.

The southern Duārs of Kāmrup.

As the Bhutias in the north, so also the Khāsis, in the south of Kāmrup, had gradually established themselves in the plains; and the Ahom viceroy at Gauhāti, finding that he was unable to oust them, had contented himself with receiving a formal acknowledgment of the Ahom supremacy. This, however, meant very little beyond the exaction of as large a sum as possible on the accession of a new chief and the supply of *pāiks* when required for the public service. In other respects the local chiefs were virtually independent; and they exercised criminal jurisdiction, and even made war on one another, with perfect impunity, or at the worst, subject to the payment of a fine as hush-money. On the advent of the British these proceedings were speedily put a stop to, but, in order to conciliate the chiefs as far as possible, a separate court was established for the trial of civil and criminal cases, composed of the chiefs themselves and a few of their principal functionaries. In lieu of feudal service and of the charges formerly payable by new chiefs at the time of their accession, a moderate land assessment was introduced. The settlement was made with the chiefs, who were given a large share of the net profits, amounting in some cases to fifty per cent. Few of them, however, possessed any aptitude for business, and they soon fell into arrears; this led eventually to the sequestration of their estates. The special court mentioned above was abolished after the extension of the Code of Criminal Procedure to the province.

The Nāgas.

The people whom we call Nāgas are known to the Assamese as Naga; they belong to a diversity of tribes, each speaking its own language and calling itself by a

distinctive name. The collective designation by which they are known to the Assamese seems to be derived, as suggested by Holcombe and Peal, from *nok* which means "folk" in some of the tribal dialects. When strange parties meet in the plains, they are said to ask each other *Tem nok e* or *O nok e*, meaning "what folk are you." The word is also found in village names, such as Nokpan, "people of the tree," and Nokrang, "people of the sky." In this connection, it is worth noting that the Khonds call themselves "Kui Loka" and the Orāons "Ku Nok." The lengthening of the first vowel sound in the Bengali and English rendering of the word is probably due to the old idea that it connected snake worship.

Gradual annexation of the Nāga hills.

The hilly tract inhabited by the various tribes known to us collectively as Nāgas had never been subjugated by the Ahoms, and it was no part of the British policy to absorb it. Pemberton and Jenkins marched across the hills from Manipur to Nowgong, but, as it appeared that the opposition of the tribesmen would throw great difficulties in the way of maintaining communications by this route, it was decided to leave them to their own devices. Those on the Sibsāgar and Lakhimpur frontier, who were accustomed to trade in the plains, were easily brought to book for any misdemeanours they might commit by the simple expedient of closing the passes against them.

The more turbulent Angāmis were less amenable. For some years it was the practice to look to Tulārām and the Raja of Manipur to exact reparation for raids committed by them, and the tendency was to encourage the latter to extend his dominion over the whole area between the Doyang and the Dhansiri. In a treaty executed with Gambhir Singh in 1833, it was stipulated that "in the event of anything happening on the eastern frontier of the British territories, the Raja will, when required, assist the British Government with a portion of his troops." This policy proving a failure, it was abandoned in favour of one of repression by our own troops; and, between the years 1835 and 1851, ten military expeditions were led into the hills. After the expedition of 1851, when severe punishment was meted out

to the offending hillmen, it was decided to try the combined effect of non-interference in their internal quarrels, of encouraging trade when they behaved well, and of shutting them out from the neighbouring markets when they gave trouble. The first year after the inauguration of this policy witnessed twenty-two raids, in which 178 persons were killed, wounded or carried off. In 1854 an officer was posted to Asālu and a line of frontier outposts was established, but they proved of very little use, and raids continued to be of frequent occurrence.

At last, in 1866, it was resolved to take possession of the Angāmi country and reclaim its inhabitants from savagery. This tract and the watershed of the Doyang were accordingly formed into a district with headquarters at Samaguting; but in 1878 this place was abandoned in favour of Kohima. The object in view was to protect the low land from the incursions of the Nāgas. It was not desired to extend British rule into the interior, but when a footing in the hills had once been obtained, further territorial expansion became almost inevitable. In 1875 the country of the Lhota Nāgas, who, on several occasions, had attacked survey parties, was annexed, and a British officer was posted at Wokha. In 1889 the Ao country also was incorporated, with the full concurrence of the people, who had claimed protection against the onslaughts of the more warlike tribes from across the Dikhu. The local officers showed a tendency to extend their control to the trans-Dikhu tribes, and to repress the system of head hunting and of raids and counter-raids prevailing in that unhappy tract, but the higher authorities declared against any further extension of our responsibilities in this direction. The Deputy Commissioner was, however, authorized to exercise political control over the Eastern Angāmis and Semas beyond the south-eastern boundary of his district, by means of an annual tour, in the course of which he enquired into and settled their inter-tribal disputes. In connexion with the Kuki rising in 1917, to be described in Chapter XVII, it was found necessary to occupy part of this tract in order to prevent the Kukis from moving into unknown country. Thus the

administered area now marches with Burma, north of the Manipur State.

After the foundation of the new district, the Angāmis gave no trouble until 1877, when they attacked a Kacha Nāga village. The people of the offending village refused to surrender the raiders, and their village was, therefore, burnt. In October 1878, a more serious outbreak occurred. Mr. Damant, the Political Officer, was shot as he was attempting to enter the village of Khonoma, and some of his escort were also killed or wounded.* The Angāmis then rose in a body and, advancing against Kohima, invested it for eleven days. The garrison was reduced to great straits for want of food and water, but Colonel (afterwards Sir James) Johnstone arrived in the nick of time with a force of 2,000 troops, supplied to him by the Raja of Manipur, and raised the siege. A campaign against the Angāmis ensued, in the course of which every one of the thirteen villages that had entered into the hostile coalition was either occupied or destroyed. They then submitted and agreed to pay revenue, to supply labour when required, and to appoint for each village a headman, who should be responsible for good order and for carrying out the wishes of Government.

Since that date steady progress has been made in the establishment of peace and good order, and in the quiet submission of the Nāgas to British rule; blood feuds and head hunting now survive only in the memory of the older generation which is rapidly passing away, and all disputes that cannot be settled by the village elders are brought before the local officers for adjudication.

Introduction of British rule in the Gāro hills.

We have seen that the Gāro hills were treated as part of Goālpāra during the first few years of British rule. At this time the Gāros were a terror to the people of the plains. In 1811 the Magistrate of Mymensingh reported that they were confirmed head hunters and gave a gruesome instance

* This was the third officer in succession, in charge of these hills, to meet with a violent death. Captain Butler had been killed in a fight with the Lhota Nāgas in 1876 and Mr. Carnegy was accidentally shot by his sentry in 1877.

of this practice which had recently come to his notice. The chiefs or zamindars of the marches were expected to restrain their incursions, but it was soon found that their tyranny and exactions were the chief cause of the raids. In order to promote the growth of order and civilization, it was decided to place the whole tract under a special Civil Commissioner. This officer took into his own hand the collection of the rents claimed by the zamindars from the Gāro villages and abolished the duties levied by them on the hill produce. For the latter they were paid compensation, Government recouping itself by means of a special house assessment on the Gāro villages. For many years a policy of non-interference with the hillmen was followed, but without much success. The tributary Gāros were most irregular in paying the promised tribute, and those of the interior committed constant raids, which were followed, either by expeditions or by a blockade of the submontane marts. These measures having proved quite ineffectual, it was decided to appoint an officer to the charge of the hills; and, in 1869, they were formed into a separate district with headquarters at Tura. This step was rewarded with immediate success, so far as the villages within the administered area were concerned, but some of the more remote villages still remained uncontrolled. In 1871 and 1872, the latter gave some trouble by attacking surveyors and raiding on some protected Gāro villages. It was, therefore, decided to bring them also under subjection, and this was done without any difficulty in the cold season of 1872-73. Three detachments of police marched through the country and easily overbore all resistance; responsible headmen were appointed, the heads taken in recent raids were surrendered, and peaceful administration was established throughout the district.

The Lushai hills.

At the earliest time of which we have any knowledge the hills lying to the south of the Surma valley were inhabited by various tribes known to the Bengalis by the generic name of Kuki. During the early years of the last century these were gradually driven northwards into the plains of Cachar by the Lushais, who made their appearance on this frontier about the year 1840. The Lushais committed their

first raid in 1849, and the punitive expedition which followed was so successful that they gave no further trouble until 1868, when a series of outrages led to an abortive expedition, which in its turn was followed by further raids. In 1871-72 two columns marched through the hills and met with entire success. From that time forward no further breaches of the peace occurred on the Assam frontier. In 1889, however, a raid was made on the Chittagong border and a number of captives were taken. Their release being demanded and refused, troops again entered the country. The captives were rescued and the chiefs who were responsible for the outrage were arrested. It was now decided to put down raids once for all by establishing military outposts at Aijal and Changsil, in the northern portion of the hills, and at Lungleh, in the southern. Political Officers were posted to Aijal and Lungleh, and the Lushais appeared to have accepted the situation when, without any warning, those near Aijal rose in a body and murdered Captain Browne, the Political Officer, who was marching, practically unattended, from that place to Changsil. In less than two months, the outbreak had been suppressed and the ringleaders arrested and deported. Early in 1892 there was an insurrection of the Eastern Lushais, but it was quelled without much trouble. From this time no further opposition was offered, and the people have now settled down quietly as peaceable and law-abiding British subjects.

The southern portion of the hills was at first administered by the Bengal Government and the northern by the Chief Commissioner of Assam, but, on the 1st April, 1898, the two tracts were amalgamated and placed under the Assam Administration. The whole area is now in charge of a single officer, who is styled the Superintendent of the Lushai hills. The internal management of the villages is left to the chiefs subject to the general control of the Superintendent and his Assistants, in whom the administration of civil and criminal justice is vested.

CHAPTER XVI.

RELATIONS WITH FRONTIER TRIBES.

THIS work would be incomplete if it did not contain some account of the relations of the British Government with the various hill tribes along the frontier, other than those already mentioned. To deal with this subject at all fully would take up far more space than could be spared. Moreover, a complete account down to the year 1883 has already been compiled.* In the present chapter, therefore, the narrative will be confined to a brief notice of the more noteworthy episodes in the history of this frontier.

The only event of importance in our relations with the Bhutias is the war of 1864—66 which has been alluded to in the last chapter. The quarrel arose on the Bengal section of the Bhutān frontier, but, when war was declared, operations were undertaken on the Assam side also. Four columns advanced into the lower hills, *viz.*, two from Jalpaiguri in Bengal, one from Goālpāra, which occupied Bissengiri, and one from Gauhāti, which took possession of Diwāngiri. At first no serious resistance was encountered; and orders had actually been issued permanently to annex the Duārs that still remained in the hands of the Bhutias, and to break up the field force when, suddenly, almost simultaneous attacks were made on the different posts. These were repulsed with ease, except at Diwāngiri, where the defenders suffered some loss, and were cut off from their water-supply and from communication with the plains. The garrison of this post had been reduced to six companies with two guns and some sappers. Colonel Campbell, who was in command, considered that this force was not strong enough to dislodge its assailants, and determined to retreat. He evacuated Diwāngiri at night, but the main column lost **Bhutias.**

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* *History of the Relations of Government with the Hill Tribes of the North-Eastern Frontier of Bengal,* by the late Sir Alexander Mackenzie, printed in Calcutta in 1884 at the Government of India Press.

its way in the darkness, and a panic set in, in which the guns and many of the wounded were abandoned and all the baggage was lost. Reinforcements were hastily sent up from India and, in less than two months, Diwāngiri was retaken, with very few casualties on our side, but with excessive and needless slaughter of the Bhutias who were found within the post. This practically concluded the war, and since that time the Bhutias have given no serious trouble. Occasional acts of violence have been committed, but they have been the work of individuals, and reparation has, when insisted on, been made by the higher authorities.

Akas.

The Akas, or Hrusso as they call themselves, are divided into two sections, which are known to the Assamese as the Hazāri Khowas, or taxers of a thousand hearths, and the Kopaschors, or cotton thieves. The commutation of their exactions for a fixed money payment has already been described. For many years the Kopāschor chief, Tangi or Tagi Raja, committed numerous robberies and murders in the plains. In 1829 he was captured and imprisoned in the Gauhāti jail. He was released in 1832, when he immediately resumed his attacks; and three years later he massacred the inhabitants of the British village and police outpost of Bālipāra. He continued his depredations till 1842 when he submitted, accepted a small pension, and agreed to take up his residence in the plains. The demarcation of the boundary, in 1874-75, caused some discontent amongst the Akas, but it was not until 1883 that they again gave any real trouble. In that year the Kopāschor chiefs, Medhi and Chandi, carried off and detained several native officials. A punitive expedition occupied Medhi's village, and recovered the captives and some loot, which had also been taken, but it did not wait there long enough to force the chiefs to submit. A blockade of the frontier followed, but it was not until 1888 that the chiefs came in and tendered their submission.

Daflas.

The Daflas, who occupy the hills to the east of the Akas, speak a dialect closely allied to that of the Abors and Miris. They committed frequent raids prior to 1852, when the *posa* question was finally settled, but since then they

have only twice broken the peace—in 1870 and 1872.* On both occasions their object was the pursuit of tribal quarrels, and not the plundering of alien inhabitants of the plains. As a punishment for the above raids a blockade was established. This proved ineffectual, and a military force was sent into the hills. The Daflas offered no active opposition, and, in the end, surrendered their captives.

Apa Tanangs. The Apa Tanangs, or Ankas, are an offshoot of the Daflas. They occupy the valley of the Kali river, at the back of the range of hills which forms the northern boundary of the North Lakhimpur sub-division. They were unknown to us until comparatively recent times. In 1896 they committed a raid in British territory, killing two men and carrying off three captives. A small force made its way unopposed to their principal village and rescued the captives.

Miris. The Miris are found, both in the plains, where they are peaceable British subjects, and also in the hills to the north, where also they are quiet and inoffensive. They act as a channel of communication with the Abors, and from this circumstance comes the name by which they are known in Assam, which means a "go-between." They have never given any trouble.

Abors. The Abors, though speaking the same language, differ greatly from the Miris in character. They are the most ruthless savages on the whole of the northern frontier, and the former sparseness of population of the north bank of the Brahmaputra, from opposite Dibrugarh to Sadiya, was due chiefly to dread of their raids. Their designation in Assamese means "independent," as contrasted with *bori*,

* Their raiding propensities were by no means new. In the days of Aurangzeb, Muhammad Kasim wrote: "The Daflas are entirely independent of the Assam Raja and plunder the country contiguous to their mountains whenever they find an opportunity." We have already seen, how frequently they came into collision with the Ahom troops. They appear to have meddled considerably in the internal affairs of the Ahoms during Gaurināth's reign, and in the narrative of Captain Welsh's expedition, we read that at Kaliābar Lieutenant Macgregor was introduced to the "principal men of the Daflas, who had elected the Bar Gohāin as their chief."

meaning "subject." They seem to have remained on friendly terms with out officers until 1848, when Captain Vetch led a small force into the hills to rescue some kidnapped Kachāri gold washers, and burnt a village as a punishment for a night attack on his camp. Several other raids followed, but the first serious outrage did not occur until 1858, when they destroyed a gold washers' village only six miles distant from Dibrugarh town. A punitive expedition which was sent against them was compelled to retreat, and a second one met with very scant success. The Abors, thus emboldened, took up a position threatening the plains. A third, and stronger, force entered the hills in 1859, and ejected them, and burnt a number of their villages. One section of the Abors then submitted, but another section was again on the war path in the following year. This led to the construction of a road along the frontier and the establishment of a line of outposts. The offenders, on seeing these preparations, submitted. During the next few years agreements were concluded with the different Abor communities, by which they were given an allowance of iron hoes, salt, rum, opium and tobacco so long as they remained on their good behaviour. There were no further outrages until 1889, when four Miris were decoyed across the frontier and murdered. For this a fine of twenty bison was imposed, and the frontier was blockaded pending payment, which was made in less than a year. In 1893 the Abors of all sections became hostile and attacked several parties of police. An expedition occupied the principal Bor Abor villages, after overcoming a good deal of resistance, and was followed by a blockade which lasted until 1900, when a general submission was made. The last disturbance was in 1911 when Mr. Williamson, Assistant Political Officer of Sadiya, Dr. Gregorson and a considerable party of servants and coolies were treacherously murdered by Abors at Pāngi, north of Pāsighāt. After the successful conclusion of the expedition which was sent to exact reparation for this outrage, a new system of administration on the frontier was introduced. This will be described in the next Chapter.

The Mishmis inhabit the country between the Dibong and the Brahmakund. There are four main tribes, Chulikātā, Digāru, Miju and Bebejiā. In 1854, a French missionary reached the confines of Tibet by way of the Miju country,* but in the following year, when repeating the visit, he was murdered. The crime was punished by a brilliant feat of arms. Lieutenant Eden led a small body of twenty sepoys and forty Khāmti volunteers with a few hill porters far into the hills, and, after forced marches for eight days in succession, surprised and captured the offending chief and his village. In spite of this, the years that followed witnessed frequent raids. In 1866 the expedient was tried of creating a militia, by supplying arms to the local Khāmtis and giving a monthly payment of one rupee to all members of this tribe who would settle along this section of the frontier. This proved successful, and very little trouble has since been given by the Mishmis. Two small raids were reported in 1878. The culprits were pursued, but escaped, and no further action was taken. In 1899 the Bebejiā Mishmis murdered three Khāmtis and carried off several children. A force was despatched against them which, in the face of great natural difficulties, reached the guilty villages, burnt them, and recovered the captives. One of the raiders was subsequently given up, and was tried and executed at Sadiya. Mishmis.

Our relations with the Khāmtis have been dealt with at sufficient length in the last chapter, and it will suffice to add that, while those round Sadiya pay revenue and are subject in all respects to the jurisdiction of the local officers, those living on the Tengapāni merely acknowledge allegiance Khāmtis.

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* This visit disposed of the old idea that a Hindu race is to be found somewhere in this direction. This idea was expounded in the following passage in Neufville's paper in *Asiatic Researches* for 1828:—"The country to the eastward of Bhot (*sc.* Tibet) and north of Sadiya, extending on the plain beyond the mountains, is said to be possessed by a powerful nation, called Kolitas or Kultas, who are described as having attained a high degree of advancement and civilization." According to the same writer, their power far exceeded that of the Ahoms, and there was formerly communication between the two States.

In 1885 Mr. F. J. Needham, C.I.E., and Captain E. H. Molesworth also penetrated to Tibet through the Miju country.

to the British Government, and are exempt from taxation and from interference with their internal affairs. The number of Khāmtis in Sadiya is dwindling; and at the time of the last census only 1,975 were enumerated there against an estimate of 3,930 in 1839.

Singphos.

The Singphos, who live, intermixed with the Khāmtis, in the country watered by the Burhi Dihing, the Noā Dihing and the Tengapāni, which formerly belonged to the Ahoms, are merely an outlying section of their tribe. Their real home is in the hilly country between the Chindwin river and the Pātkāi, where they are known as Kākhyens. The name by which they are known on the Assam frontier is simply the tribal word for man. They made their appearance on the outskirts of Assam during the Moāmariā rebellions. Their attacks on the Assamese and the subsequent release of their slaves by Captain Neufville have already been described.

This measure struck a severe blow at their prosperity, and the feelings of resentment which it kindled led to a series of risings. The last took place in 1843, and was shared in, not only by all the Singphos on the Assam border and by others from the direction of Burma, but also by a certain number of Shāns and Burmese. It was believed to have been fomented by the Tipām Raja, a scion of the Ahom royal family, whose sister had married the king of Burma, and who had been appointed by that monarch to be Governor of Hukong with, it was said, instructions to take advantage of any opportunity that might arise for invading Assam. No time was lost in marching troops against them. The operations dragged on for months, but they ended in the capture of the chiefs who had instigated the rebellion, and in the complete submission of the Singphos. Since then they have shown no disposition to give trouble. Their pacific attitude in recent times is attributed by some to their now universal habit of eating excessive quantities of opium, which, it is said, has sapped their energy and robbed them of their old warlike proclivities.

Eastern Nāgas.

The Nāgas of the Nāga Hills district have already been noticed at sufficient length, but certain tribes bearing this designation are found further east, far beyond its boundary.

From the Dikhu to the Tirāp, an affluent of the Burhi Dihing, the Nāga tribes along the frontier are distinguished by the names of the passes through which they descend to the plains, such as Nāmsāngiā, Jobokā, Tāblungia, Assiringiā, etc. In the time of the Ahom kings, those near the frontier used to pay annual tribute of elephants' tusks, etc., in return for which they obtained grants of land. Some of these, known as Nāga *Khāts*, are still enjoyed. These people carry on a considerable trade in cotton and other hill produce, which they exchange for salt and rice; and they are easily kept in order by preventing them from visiting the plains, when guilty of misconduct, until reparation has been made. They quarrel amongst themselves, but it has never been our policy to meddle with their domestic feuds. Behind them are other tribes of whom we have little knowledge, except that some of them come down in the winter months to work on the tea gardens. Further east, as far as the Pātkāi, there are various Nāga tribes who are in complete subjection to the Singphos, and who seem to be quite harmless and inoffensive.

CHAPTER XVII.

IMPORTANT EVENTS OF RECENT TIMES.

The Mutiny in (*a*) Surma valley.

THE great Sepoy Mutiny of 1857 left Assam almost untouched. The situation was at times by no means free from danger; and the comparative immunity which this part of India enjoyed was due very largely to the watchfulness and resource displayed by the civil and military officers on the spot. Shortly before the first outbreak Mr. Allen, of the Board of Revenue, had been deputed to visit the Khāsi and Jaintia hills; and the Lieutenant-Governor, Sir Frederick Halliday, took advantage of his presence at Cherrapunji, then the capital of that district, to place him temporarily in charge of the Eastern Frontier, including Sylhet and Cachar. Exaggerated stories of the fall of the British power caused some excitement amongst the Khāsi chiefs, and the ex-Raja of Jaintia began to intrigue with some of them with a view to the recovery of his lost possessions. Mr. Allen thought that to cause his arrest would invest the matter with undue importance; he therefore contented himself with ordering him to reside in Sylhet town, where he would be under the eye of the British authorities. In November 1857, the three companies of the 34th Native Infantry stationed at Chittagong mutinied and, after burning their lines, breaking open the jail and plundering the treasury, marched in the direction of Comilla; they then turned off into the jungles of Hill Tippera, whence they subsequently emerged in the south-east of the Sylhet district. Their intention was to push on, through the south of Cachar, into Manipur. As soon as Mr. Allen heard of their movements, he determined to intercept them. Under his orders Major Byng, the Commandant of the Sylhet Light Infantry (now the 8th Gurkha Rifles), set out with about 160 men and reached Pertābgarh, some eighty miles distant, in the short space of thirty-six hours. Then, hearing that the rebels were expected shortly to pass through Latu, twenty-eight miles away, he made a night march and arrived

there early next morning. The rebels, numbering about two hundred, came up soon afterwards. They tried by taunts and solicitations to pervert the Hindustanis, who formed half the detachment, but the only answer they received was a steady fire, which put them to flight with a loss of twenty-six killed. Major Byng was also killed. His successor in the command did not think it advisable to follow them into the jungle, but a few days later, after entering the Cachar district, they were attacked by another detachment of the Sylhet Light Infantry under Lieutenant Ross, and were again put to flight. They still headed for Manipur, and were joined by some Manipuri princes, pretenders to the Rāj, with a few followers. They were repeatedly attacked, both by the regular troops and by Kuki scouts, who received a reward for each mutineer whom they killed; and at last, of the whole number that left Chittagong, only three or four escaped death or capture.

When the news first reached Calcutta of the arrival of the mutineers in Sylhet, several companies of a British regiment were sent thither, but they returned to Dacca as soon as it was found that the local regiment was thoroughly loyal. The services of the latter and of Mr. Allen were repeatedly acknowledged by the Lieutenant-Governor.

(*b*) Brahmaputra valley.

There was a large number of Hindustani sepoys in the 1st Assam Light Infantry, then stationed at Dibrugarh, as well as in a local artillery corps. There was also a considerable, though smaller, number of these upcountry men in the 2nd Assam Light Infantry which was quartered at Gauhāti. In September 1857 an uneasy feeling began to display itself among the men of the Dibrugarh regiment, owing to letters received by some of the Hindustani sepoys from Shāhābād, where many of them had been recruited; and some of them were found to have entered into a conspiracy with the Sāring Raja, a scion of the Ahom royal family who resided at Jorhāt. Colonel Hannay, the Commandant, at once deprived the Hindustani members of the regiment of the opportunity for communication with each other, and for combination, by sending them to the small outlying outposts, while he concentrated in Dibrugarh the loyal Gurkhas and the

hillmen attached to the corps. The Sāring Raja was a mere boy, and a complete tool in the hands of his Dewan, Manirām Dutt, who was at this time in Calcutta. The Raja was placed under arrest and, on his house being searched, treasonable letters were discovered from Manirām. The latter was arrested in Calcutta, and, after being detained there for some weeks, he was sent up to Assam, where he was tried, convicted and executed. Four other ringleaders in the plot were placed on their trial, of whom one was hanged and three were sentenced to long terms of transportation. When tidings of the conspiracy reached Calcutta, three companies of the naval brigade, each numbering a hundred men, were sent in succession to Gauhāti. These prompt measures prevented further trouble. The thanks of Government were conveyed to all concerned, including Colonel Jenkins, the Commissioner, Captains Bivar and Holroyd, the Principal Assistants of Dibrugarh and Sibsāgar, and Colonel Hannay, the Commandant of the 1st Assam Light Infantry.

The Jaintia rebellions of 1860—62.

Mr. Allen, the Member of the Board of Revenue, whose visit to the Khāsi and Jaintia hills has already been alluded to, came to the conclusion that the Syntengs should be required to contribute something to the general revenues in acknowledgment of the supremacy of the Government. He was of opinion that a light and judicious taxation would conduce to the preservation of tranquillity and good order in the Jaintia hills, and referred, as an example, to the Hos of Singbhum who, it was asserted, by virtue of a moderate taxation, had become less turbulent and aggressive, and more thrifty, diligent and submissive to the authorities. His advice was followed, and in 1860 a house-tax was imposed. A few months later the hillmen broke out in open rebellion, but a large force of troops was at hand, and before the revolt could make any head, it was stamped out, and the villagers were awed into apparent submission. Measures were then taken for the improvement of the administration. The powers of the *dolois*, or headmen, were increased, but they were made liable to dismissal for misconduct, and were required to report all criminal offences to the police.

Unfortunately, at this juncture, it was decided that the Jaintia hills were to be treated in the same way as other parts of British India in respect of the levy of the new income-tax, and 310 persons, including all the leaders of the people, were assessed with an aggregate tax of Rs. 1,259. It was paid the first year without overt opposition, but the discontent which it engendered, following closely on the imposition of the house-tax, coupled with rumours of further imposts and the offensive conduct of the police, led to a fresh outbreak in January 1862. The police station at Jowai was burnt to the ground; the garrison of sepoys was besieged, and all show of British authority was swept away. In order to quell the revolt, two regiments of Sikhs and an elephant battery were moved into the hills, but the Syntengs, though armed only with bows and arrows, fought bravely for their independence. Their chief defence, like that of most tribes on this frontier, consisted in a series of stockades, one behind the other; and the paths leading to their villages were thickly planted with *pānjis*, or little bamboo spikes, stuck into the ground.

The operations were tedious and harassing. At the end of four months the rebellion seemed to have been put down, but it soon broke out again with greater fury than before; and it was not until November 1863, when every glen and jungle had been searched out by our troops and police, that the last of the insurgent leaders surrendered and the pacification of the hills was completed. It was decided that the house-tax should be retained, but in other respects everything possible was done to make the Syntengs contented with British rule. Roads were constructed; schools were opened; the interference of the regular police was reduced to a minimum; the people were given the right to elect their *dolois*, and to form *panchāyats* for the trial of civil and criminal cases; and lastly, the European officer stationed at Jowai was required to qualify in the Khāsi language and to visit every village in his jurisdiction at least once a year.

Prohibition of opium cultivation

The inhabitants of the Brahmaputra valley were formerly addicted to the use of opium to a degree unknown

anywhere else in India. The poppy was grown by the people themselves. When the heads had reached the proper size, diagonal incisions were made and the juice was collected on strips of cloth, about two inches broad, which, when fully saturated and dried, were rolled up in little bundles and kept till required for use. It is not known when the drug was introduced into Assam. In a report written for Mill by the *ex*-Dewan of Raja Purandar Singh, it is said that it was first cultivated in the reign of Raja Lakshmi Singh, but that the area sown with it was strictly limited until the Burmese overthrew the old Ahom institutions. We know, however, that it was already in fairly common use in 1793, when Captain Welsh found the Raja, Gaurināth, so completely abandoned to the opium habit that he was often quite incapacitated for the transaction of public business. A few years later David Scott remarked on the enormous quantity of opium consumed by the inhabitants. The widespread and immoderate consumption of the drug was noticed by Robinson and other writers, including Mill, who, in 1853, said that "three-fourths of the population are opium-eaters, and men, women and children alike use the drug." Mill held that its excessive use was the greatest barrier to improvement which it was within the power of Government to remove, and he quoted with approval the opinion of a late Judicial Commissioner of Assam that "something should be done to check the immoderate use of the drug, and to rescue at least the rising generation from indulgence in a luxury which destroys the constitution, enfeebles the mind and paralyzes industry."

Although convinced of its injurious effects when taken in excess, Mill was by no means disposed to prevent the people from having any opium at all. "Its use," he said, "has, with many, almost become a necessary of life, and in a damp climate like Assam, it is perhaps beneficial if taken with moderation." He recommended that, while home cultivation should be prohibited, opium should be issued to all the treasuries in Assam, for sale to persons who might require it, at a price which, though not prohibitive, should be sufficiently high to act as a deterrent on its excessive

consumption.* This plan was adopted, and it has met with marked success. During the sixty years for which the system has been in vogue the price of the drug has gradually been raised. It is now more than treble the amount originally fixed. Consumption has steadily declined, and there are now comparatively few men who take it to marked excess, while it is seldom, if ever, consumed by women or children.

Staff of officers in Brahmaputra valley.

In 1853 the officers appointed to carry on the administration of the Brahmaputra valley were the Commissioner, who was assisted by a Deputy Commissioner, both stationed at Gauhāti, a Principal (or Senior) Assistant in charge of each of the six districts, three junior assistants, and eight sub-assistants. There was also a separate civil judicial establishment consisting of a principal sadr amin, six sadr amins and seventeen munsifs. Four of the sub-assistants were stationed at the outlying sub-divisions of Barpeta, Tezpur, North Lakhimpur and Golāghāt. The pay of the Commissioner was Rs. 2,000 per mensem; four of the Principal Assistants drew Rs. 1,000, and two, Rs. 750; the junior assistants got Rs. 500 and the sub-assistants Rs. 350. The maximum remuneration of the sadr amins and munsifs appears to have been Rs. 300 and Rs. 100 a month, respectively.

The Principal Assistants and two of the three junior assistants were military officers. These officers were for many years recruited from the staff of the Assam regiments, to whom a pledge was given that they should have a preferential claim to the post of junior assistant, if duly qualified by character and knowledge of the local languages. In 1861 the designations of the officers serving under the Commissioner were changed; the Deputy Commissioner, whose powers were those of a District and Sessions Judge, was thenceforth known as the Judicial Commissioner; the

* The necessity for some such action had long been recognized; and in the treaty made with Purandar Singh, when he was installed as Raja of Upper Assam, it was stipulated that he should adopt all preventive measures that might be taken in British territory, "it being notorious that the quantity of opium produced in Assam is the cause of many miseries to the inhabitants."

Principal Assistants became Deputy Commissioners; the junior assistants, assistant commissioners*; and the sub-assistants, extra assistant commissioners. The separate establishment of sadr amins and munsifs was abolished in 1872, when some of these officers were made extra assistant commissioners, and the officers of the ordinary district staff were invested with civil powers; the Deputy Commissioners became Sub-Judges and the assistant and extra assistant commissioners were invested with the powers of a munsif. At first several of the sub-divisional officers exercised the powers of Sub-Judge, but after a short time they were placed on the same footing as other assistant and extra assistant commissioners.

Language of the Courts.

For more than ten years after the annexation, Assamese was the language of the Courts in the Brahmaputra valley proper, but it was then superseded by Bengali, which also became the medium of instruction in the schools. The people protested loudly and often, but for a long time without any result. It was not until Sir George Campbell became Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal that Assamese was restored to the position which it ought never to have lost. This is not the place to review the old argument as to whether Assamese is a distinct language or merely a dialect of Bengali. It may be pointed out, however, that the possession or otherwise of a separate literature is generally regarded as one of the best tests to apply, and that, if this be taken as the criterion, Assamese is certainly entitled to rank as a separate language. Assamese is believed to have attained its present state of development independently of Bengali; and it is the speech of a distinct nationality which has always strenuously resisted the efforts which have been made to foist Bengali on it.

Extension of general laws to Assam.

In 1860 the general Codes of Civil and Criminal Procedure were extended to the Brahmaputra valley, and in 1862 the Indian Penal Code came into force *proprio vigore*. These enactments superseded the special Assam

* Amongst the villagers the Assistant Commissioners are still, or were until recently, often known as "Junior Sāhibs."

Code, which had been drafted in 1837 and revised ten years later, but there was still great uncertainty as to the operation of the other laws in force in Bengal. These laws, as a rule, contained no local extent clause, and the general opinion of Assam officers seems to have been that they were not actually in force, and needed only to be followed in the spirit "as far as applicable." A very similar state of affairs prevailed in Cachar, but not in Sylhet, which at this time was regarded as an integral part of Bengal and, as such, was subject to all its laws and regulations.

Since about 1870 all legislative enactments have been provided with a clause showing precisely how and where they are to operate. The difficulty in respect of the earlier enactments which did not contain these particulars was met in 1874 by the passing of two Acts—The Scheduled Districts Act, XIV of 1874, and the Laws Local Extent Act XV of 1874. The latter enactment was designed to specify the laws which were in force in India generally, except in certain backward tracts, which were described as "scheduled districts." The Scheduled Districts Act gave power to Government to declare by notification in the Gazette what laws were in force in such districts, and to extend to them any enactments in force elsewhere which it might seem desirable to bring into operation. The whole of Assam, including Sylhet, was classed as a "scheduled district" and all doubts as to what laws are, and what laws are not, in force, have now been removed by a series of notifications under the Scheduled Districts Act. The effect of these notifications has been to place the plains of Assam in much the same legal position as other parts of India.

Exclusion of certain tracts from the general laws.

The inhabitants of the hilly tracts, however, were not yet suited for the elaborate legal rules laid down in the procedure codes and in several other enactments of the same class, and they had to be governed in a simpler and more personal manner than those of the more civilized and longer-settled districts. It was, therefore, provided by the Frontier Tracts Regulation, II of 1880, that the operation of unsuitable laws might be barred in all the hill districts, in the North Cachar sub-division, the Mikir hills tract in

Nowgong and the Dibrugarh frontier tract in Lakhimpur By orders issued under this Regulation the tracts in question have been excluded from the operation of the enactments relating to criminal procedure,* stamps, court-fees, registration and transfer of property; and a simpler system of administrating justice in civil and criminal matters has been prescribed by rules framed under the Scheduled Districts Act. In these tracts the Head of the Local Government is the chief appellate authority in civil and criminal cases, and the High Court possesses no jurisdiction except in criminal cases against European British subjects; the Deputy Commissioner exercises the combined powers of Judge and District Magistrate, and the Assistant and Extra Assistant Commissioners the powers of magistrates and munsifs; petty cases, both civil and criminal, are dealt with by village tribunals, presided over by headmen chosen by the people themselves, whose procedure is free from all legal technicalities.

The Eastern Duārs in Goālpāra are also administered, in civil matters, in accordance with rules under the Scheduled Districts Act, in lieu of the Civil Procedure Code which is not in force there.

Inner Line Regulation.

The unrestricted intercourse which formerly existed between British subjects in Assam and the wild tribes living across the frontier frequently led to quarrels and, sometimes, to serious disturbances. This was especially the case in connection with the traffic in rubber brought down by the hillmen, for which there was great competition. The opening out of tea gardens beyond the border-line also at times involved the Government in troublesome disputes with the frontier tribes in their vicinity.

In order to prevent the recurrence of these difficulties, *power was given to the local authorities by the Inner Line Regulation of 1873 to prohibit British subjects generally, or those of specified classes, from going beyond a certain line,* laid down for the purpose, without a pass or license, issued

* The Civil Procedure Code never was in force in the hill districts.

by the Deputy Commissioner and containing such conditions as might seem necessary. As it was not always convenient to define the actual boundary of the British possessions, this line does not necessarily indicate the territorial frontier, but only the limits of the administered area; it is known as the "Inner Line" and, being prescribed merely for the above purpose, it does not in any way decide the sovereignty of the territory beyond. Such a line has been laid down along the northern, eastern and south-eastern borders of the Brahmaputra valley. There was also formerly an Inner Line on the Lushai marches, but it has been allowed to fall into desuetude since our occupation of the Lushai hills. Planters are not allowed to acquire land beyond the Inner Line, either from the Government or from any local chief or tribe.

Meaning of term "Regulation."

The Inner Line Regulation was the first law promulgated in Assam under the authority conferred by the Statute 33 Vict., Chapter 3, which gives to the executive government of India a power of summary legislation for backward tracts. Such laws are called Regulations to distinguish them from the Acts, or laws passed after discussion in the legislature.

Formation of the Chief Commissionership of Assam.

The inconvenience of governing Assam as an appanage of the unwieldy province of Bengal had long been recognized. It was remote and difficult of access, and few Lieutenant-Governors ever visited it. The local conditions were altogether different from those which prevailed in Bengal, and were quite unknown to the officers responsible for the government of that province, who had not the time, even if they had the inclination, to make themselves acquainted with them. But the patronage was valuable, and proposals for its severance were always vigorously opposed until Sir George Campbell became the Lieutenant-Governor. That strenuous ruler, thought he took a greater personal interest in this out-of-the-way tract than any of his predecessors had done, speedily became convinced of the impossibility of carrying on the administration of Bengal on the system which then prevailed. He was strongly of opinion that the position of the Bengal Government should

either be raised, by amalgamating the Board of Revenue with it, or lowered, by lopping off some of its more remote territories. The Government of India preferred the latter alternative, to which Sir George Campbell assented; and, on the 6th February, 1874, the districts which now form the province of Assam, with the exception of Sylhet and of tracts subsequently acquired, were separated from the Government of Bengal and formed into a Chief Commissionership. On the 12th September of the same year Sylhet was incorporated in the new province.

Lieutenant-Colonel R. H. Keatinge, V.C., C.S.I., was appointed the first Chief Commissioner. By Acts VIII and XII of 1874 the legal powers which were previously vested in the Lieutenant-Governor or the Board of Revenue, Bengal, were transferred to the Governor-General in Council, who was at the same time authorised to delegate all or any of them to the Chief Commissioner. The powers so delegated, combined with those conferred by the General Clauses Act, which vests in the Chief Commissioner the powers of a Local Government in respect of Acts of the Imperial Council passed since the year 1874, practically placed the Chief Commissioner in the position of a Local Government in respect of all legislative enactments in force in the province.* By Resolutions of the Government of India dated the 12th May and 18th December, 1874, the new Administration was provided with a separate staff of Deputy and Assistant Commissioners and other officers required to carry on the revenue and judicial business of the country. Since then the term Assam, which had originally been applied to the tract of country ruled by the

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* The laws in force in Assam include such unrepealed Statutes of the Imperial Parliament, Bengal Regulations of the Governor of Fort William, Acts of the Governor-General in Council, Acts of the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal in Council and Regulations under Statute 33 Vic., Cap. 3, as apply *proprio vigore,* or have been declared in force under section 3 of the Scheduled Districts Act, or have been extended to the province under section 5 of the said Act or under some power of extension contained in the enactment itself. They also include laws made by the Assam Legislative Council which was created in 1920.

Ahoms, and was subsequently used with reference to the area under the control of the Commissioner of Assam, *i.e.*, the six districts of the Brahmaputra valley, has been given a wider signification, and is now used as the designation of the whole territory which was included in the Chief Commissionership, including the Surma valley, the hill districts and Manipur.

Subsequent changes in form of Government.

In October 1905 Assam was amalgamated with the districts of the Dacca, Chittagong and Rajshahi Commissionerships of Bengal, with the exclusion of the Darjeeling district and the addition of Malda, to form a new province, known as Eastern Bengal and Assam, under a Lieutenant-Governor. This change, however, was of very brief duration. At the Imperial Coronation Durbar held at Delhi in December, 1911, His Imperial Majesty announced a new distribution of territory. The sub-provinces of Bihar and Orissa were cut off from Bengal and formed into an independent Lieutenant-Governorship; Eastern Bengal was re-united with West Bengal, and Assam again became a separate province under a Chief Commissioner. The new scheme took effect from 1st April, 1912.

A further change occurred early in 1921 when, in accordance with the provisions of the Government of India Act, 1919, Assam was constituted a Governor's province. It is now administered in regard to the subjects classed as "reserved," by the Governor and his Executive Council consisting of two Members, and in regard to "transferred" subjects by the Governor and two Ministers, who must be chosen from the elected members of the Legislative Council.* The latter body has power to make laws for the peace and good government of the province, subject to certain restrictions laid down in the Government of India Act: it consists of the members of the executive council *ex-officio*, 39 elected members and 12 members nominated by the Governor, of whom 4 are officials.

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* The "reserved" subjects at present include *inter alia*, police, law and justice, land revenue and forests and the "transferred" subjects, education, excise, public works, medical and jails.

Staff of officers in the Surma Valley.

The two districts of the Surma valley, which were transferred from Bengal to Assam on the formation of the Chief Commissionership, differed considerably in respect of their system of administration. Sylhet was a "Regulation" district and already had a separate judicial service, at the head of which was the District and Sessions Judge. He is aided at the present time by an Additional Judge, two subordinate judges, and a staff of munsifs for the disposal of civil cases. In 1874 the Deputy Commissioner of Sylhet and his subordinates had no civil powers and exercised only ordinary magisterial powers in criminal matters. In Cachar, the conditions at that time more nearly resembled those prevailing in the Brahmaputra valley. The Deputy Commissioner was vested with special powers under Section 30 of the Code of Criminal Procedure. The Judge of Sylhet was also Sessions Judge of Cachar, but he had no civil jurisdiction in that district; the Deputy Commissioner exercised the powers of a District Judge while the duties of subordinate judge and munsif were performed by the assistant and extra assistant commissioners respectively. Various changes have since been made. Except in North Cachar the powers of a District Judge have been transferred to the District Judge of Sylhet; and though the Deputy Commissioner has been vested instead with the powers of a subordinate judge (now no longer exercised by the assistant commissioner), he usually exercises them only for the performance of routine work. One of the subordinate judges of Sylhet has been given jurisdiction in Cachar, and he pays periodic visits to the district and hears most of the appeals from the assistant and extra assistant commissioners, who still do the work of munsifs.

Efficiency of official staff in 1874.

The earlier British administrators of Assam included several men of great ability and energy; and the preliminary arrangements which they made for the government of the country were excellent. But as time went by, and the people settled down contentedly under British rule, the administration was allowed to run in a groove. The district officers, as we have seen, were in almost all cases military officers transferred from the local regiments to civil employ, and, so long as their orders were not openly flouted and the

revenue was collected with fair punctuality, they left most things in the hands of their subordinates and troubled themselves but little with the details of district work.

Colonel Pollok, who went to Assam shortly before the formation of the Chief Commissionership, had a very poor opinion of the manner in which the province was governed at that time. According to him the Commissioner, constantly thwarted by the higher authorities, who resided nine hundred miles away and were quite ignorant of local conditions, "soon became disgusted, and contented himself with drawing his salary," while "generally the officials in Assam knew very little of the country. The Commissioner confined himself to the river, went perhaps to Udalguri at the time of the fair, and visited Shillong, but knew nothing of the interior of the country. The Deputy Commissioners went year after year along certain routes, where everything was prepared for them; but even they knew nothing of the interior of the country."*

The free and easy methods of former times are well illustrated by McCosh's account of the jails. The prisoners were all put in irons, but there was very little discipline, and they were given an allowance of three pice a day, with which they purchased their own provisions from traders in the jail bazar. "Many of the prisoners," he says, "lead rather a happy life and consider themselves as Company's servants. They take as much pains to burnish their irons as they would a bracelet, and would not choose to escape though they had an opportunity." On more than one occasion undetected burglaries were traced to convicts in the jail, who were let out at night by the jailor, and shared with him their ill-gotten gains.

Improvements effected under the Chief Commissioners.

The formation of the Chief Commissionership led to a marked improvement in the government of the province. The Commission was strengthened by the addition of a number of trained civilians from Bengal, and the proceedings of the local officers were more closely and efficiently supervised. Every branch of the administration was

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* *Sport in British Burma, Assam, etc.,* Vol. II, pages 61 and 78.

overhauled, and many necessary reforms were introduced. Special enactments were drafted to provide for local needs, and the uncertain maze of incomplete and conflicting executive instructions was replaced by clear and precise rules, framed under these enactments and deriving therefrom the force of law.

Formation of Sylhet sub-divisions.

One of the first improvements brought about under the new régime was the introduction of the sub-divisional system into the Sylhet district, which had previously been administered entirely from the head-quarters station. It was clearly impossible, in this way, to deal adequately with the requirements of a tract containing a population of two millions, and possessing a most difficult and complicated system of land tenures, and in which the communications were so bad that many parts were almost inaccessible at certain seasons of the year. To remedy this state of affairs, four outlying sub-divisions were formed, *viz.*, Sunāmganj, Habiganj, Maulvi Bazar and Karimganj, and a separate officer at head-quarters was told off to deal with the Jaintia parganas. It is now possible for the people in all parts of the district to obtain justice, pay in their land revenue, and transact other business with the officers of Government within a reasonable distance of their own homes, and for the officers to obtain an adequate knowledge of the local conditions prevailing in the areas which they have to administer.

Appointment of Commissioners.

For some years after the creation of the province the Chief Commissioner had no Commissioner to assist him. But the steady increase of work rendered it more and more difficult for him to perform efficiently his duties as head of the administration and, at the same time, to exercise direct control over the proceedings of the district officers. Accordingly, in 1880, he was relieved of the latter duty in the districts of the Brahmaputra valley by the Judicial Commissioner or, as he was now called, the Judge, of those districts, who was invested with the powers exercised by a Commissioner of a Division in Bengal.

In the course of time, the constant elaboration of the system of administration, coupled with the increase of work

consequent on the growth of the tea gardens and of the immigrant population, made the two-fold duties of the Judge-Commissioner too heavy for one man to perform; and in 1903 the appointment was split up and a separate officer was appointed as Judge. There being now a whole-time Judge, the Deputy Commissioners have been relieved of the special powers which they formerly exercised under section 30 of the Criminal Procedure Code.

In the rest of the province the Chief Commissioner continued to exercise direct control over the district officers until 1905 when the growing burden of the administration rendered this no longer possible. A second Commissioner was then appointed for the Surma valley and Hill Districts, with the exception of the Gāro Hills, which was included, in 1909, within the jurisdiction of the Commissioner of the Brahmaputra valley districts.

Formation of military police battalions.

In the early days of British rule, the protection of the frontier was wholly in the hands of the military authorities; but, as greater precautions were taken to prevent raids, the outposts to be garrisoned became too numerous for the limited number of troops available, and some of them were entrusted to the district police. The latter force was divided into two parts, the one part being unarmed and performing duties of a purely civil nature, while the other was armed and was employed, partly in guarding jails and treasuries and in furnishing escorts, and partly in manning some of the frontier outposts. In 1879 there were four regiments in the province, who held fourteen outposts, and about 2,200 armed police, distributed over ten districts and entrusted with the defence of thirty-five outposts. It was proposed by the Chief Commissioner, Sir Steuart Bayley, to raise the strength of the armed police to three thousand men and to entrust them with all frontier outpost duty, thereby relieving the military, whose strength he thought might then be somewhat reduced. The outcome of this proposal, as revised by his successors, Sir Charles Elliott, after consultation with the Commander-in-Chief, was that the armed police were entirely separated from the civil. Instead of being scattered over ten districts, they were

collected at four centres and formed into regular "Military Police" battalions, drilled and disciplined on the regimental system, and commanded by junior officers of the Indian Army. An additional battalion was formed after the annexation of the Lushai hills. There are now five battalions of Assam Rifles, as they are now called, with head-quarters at Aijal, Sadiya, Kohima, Imphal and Lokra. The total strength slightly exceeds four thousand. The men are mainly Gurkhas and Meches. They are enlisted subject to the conditions of the Assam Rifles Act, 1920, which places them on a footing very similar to that of the native army. Their discipline is, as a rule, good; and they have rendered excellent service, not only on outpost duty, but also in various expeditions against the hill tribes, for which, as they travel lighter, they have often been employed in preference to regular troops.

Formation of Sadiya and Balipara frontier tracts.

The murder of Mr. Williamson and his party by Abors in 1911, which has already been narrated, following on a long series of outrages by tribes living beyond the Inner Line, led to a complete revision of the system of administration on the northern frontier. Two new charges, known as the Sadiya and Bālipāra frontier tracts, were created and placed under the control of Political Officers. These charges consist partly of settled plains portions of the Lakhimpur and Darrang districts, respectively, in which the administration is practically the same as that obtaining in those districts, and partly of areas beyond the Inner Line inhabited by the border tribes, over whom only loose political control is exercised. The Sadiya Frontier Tract extends on the north and east to the confines of Tibet and touches Burma on the south-east and south. The Bālipāra tract includes the important trade route from Udalguri into Tibet, which is the shortest way from India to Lhassa. As a result of this measure the relations between the hillmen and the people of the plains have greatly improved.

Revenue history Brahmaputra valley.

The early revenue history of the districts of the Brahmaputra valley, excluding Goālpāra, has already been briefly described. In 1870 the assessment was raised to a uniform rate of one rupee per *bigha* (one-third of an acre)

for *basti*, ten annas for *rupit*, and eight annas for *faringati*. Between the years 1883 and 1893 a cadastral, or field to field, survey, on a scale of 16 inches to the mile, was made of the whole area, except tracts where cultivation was sparse, which were afterwards surveyed by non-professional agency. The assessment was then revised; each class of land was divided into three sub-classes and new rates were imposed, ranging from Re. 1-6-0 to Re. 1-2-0 per *bigha* for *basti*, from one rupee to twelve annas for *rupit*, and from twelve annas to nine annas for *faringati*. The main consideration taken into account was the demand for land in a village, as indicated by the density of population and the proportion of settled to total area. All land of the same description in a village was placed in the same class. Experience showed that this method of assessment resulted in a very uneven distribution of the revenue demand. Between the years 1905 and 1912 a new settlement for a period of twenty years was effected. The main divisions of *basti*, *rupit* and *faringati* were sub-divided into classes recognized by the cultivators, and the relative productiveness of each class was expressed by a numerical factor: this figure was taken to represent the number of "soil-units" in each *bigha* of the particular class of land, so that when the area of any class was multiplied by its factor, the product was the number of soil-units in that area. At this settlement the average assessment per *bigha* of permanent cultivation varied from 11.5 annas in Nowgong to 14.7 annas in Lakhimpur.

It is a moot point whether the Bijni estate in Goālpāra ever came under the decennial settlement which was afterwards made permanent, or whether the annual payment made by its owner is not rather of the nature of tribute; but for all practical purposes the whole of the Goālpāra district may be regarded as settled permanently, except the Eastern Duārs, or the northern submontane tract taken from Bhutān after the war of 1864. Three of these Duārs are the absolute property of Government; the rates are lower, but in other respects they are managed in the same way as the districts of the Brahmaputra valley proper. The other

two are settled with the proprietors of the Bijni and Sidli estates.

Cachar.

When Cachar was annexed, Government stepped into the position of the Raja as absolute owner of the soil. The old rates of assessment were continued till 1839, when a five years' settlement was made. During this period a professional survey was effected, and the next settlement was concluded on its basis for a period of fifteen years; all cultivated land was assessed at a uniform rate of Rs. 3 per *hāl* (nearly five acres); waste land paid no rent for five years and only half rates for the next five. In 1859 a twenty years' settlement was effected. Then followed one for fifteen years and, in 1900, another for the same term. At this last settlement an attempt was made to assign the villages to classes according to the estimated profits of cultivation, and also to recognize distinctions in the quality of land within the village. Rice lands were distributed into five classes, and other cultivated lands, except tea for which there is only one rate, into four. The *bigha* was introduced as the unit of area, and separate leases were issued to individual settlement-holders in lieu of the old co-parcenary tenures which had come down from the days of native rule, when bodies of men, often of different castes or even religions, combined to break up waste land, and were held jointly responsible for the whole revenue payable thereon. In 1918-19 the district was again re-settled for a further period of twenty years on the soil unit system adopted at the last settlement of the Brahmaputra valley. The rates now range from 1.5 to 3 annas per *bigha* for waste, from 5 to 15 annas for cultivated land and from 6 annas to Rs. 1-3-0 for homestead.

Sylhet.

Sylhet was included in the permanent settlement carried out in Bengal in 1793, but it differed from all other districts, except Chittagong, in that the settlement was made after measurement, and was effected, not with the zamindars, but with the superior raiyats or middlemen. There are thus many more estates than elsewhere; and considerable areas,

which were then waste, were not included in any permanently settled estate. Most of these areas, or *ilām* (proclaimed) lands, have since been brought under cultivation, and have been surveyed and settled on various occasions. The area dealt with in the settlement effected in 1902, including Pertābgarh and certain small tenures of a similar status but different origin, was about 160,000 acres. On its expiry in 1922 a new settlement on the soil-unit system was taken in hand. This is exclusive of the Jaintia parganas which, though they form part of the Sylhet district, have a revenue history more nearly akin to that of Cachar. These parganas have been settled at different times for varying terms. Here also the soil-unit system has now been introduced in a twenty years' settlement dating from 1918. The rates per *bigha* vary from 1 to 2 annas for waste land, from 2 to 9 annas for cultivation, and from 4 to 12 annas for homestead.

Hill districts.

In the hill districts, save in a few exceptional tracts, such as the plains mauzas of the Gāro hills, there is no land revenue settlement properly so called, and the assessment is on the houses, and not on the land. The usual rate of house-tax is two rupees, but it rises to three rupees in some tracts, while in the Lushai hills it is only one rupee per house. The hill tribes generally cultivate on the *jhum* system, *i.e.*, they burn down part of the forest, the ashes of which make a valuable manure, and then dibble in various kinds of seeds all mixed together. After one or two years, cultivation becomes impossible on account of the choking weeds that spring up; the villagers then move on to a new clearance, and the deserted fields remain unfit for cultivation until, after the lapse of some years, fresh forest growth has killed out the weeds. Each village thus needs a far larger area for its crops than is under cultivation in any particular year, and serious disputes have been known to occur regarding land that to all appearance is a neglected and useless jungle. Very similar conditions exist in some of the more remote tracts of the plains districts, such as the North Cachar sub-division and the Mikir hills tract in Nowgong.

The Land and Revenue Regulation. Up to the year 1886, Sylhet proper was under the operation of the old Bengal Regulations and the other enactments relating to land and revenue which were in force in that province. In the Jaintia parganas and Cachar, and also, though to a less extent, in Goālpāra, the spirit of these enactments was followed, but they were not treated as actually in force. In the Brahmaputra valley, excluding Goālpāra, the settlement rules of the Board of Revenue had been replaced by local rules; in other respects the spirit of the Bengal regulations was followed, but only so far as the officers concerned considered them to be suitable to local conditions. The state of doubt and uncertainty arising from this state of affairs was removed by the enactment, in 1886, of the Assam Land and Revenue Regulation, which has been brought into force in all the plains districts of the Province and contains all the necessary provisions of the revenue law of Bengal, which it repeals so far as Assam is concerned. It has not yet been generally introduced into the hill districts, where the requirements of the primitive inhabitants are amply provided for by a few simple executive instructions.

Steady improvement in communications. When Mill visited Assam in 1853, carts and carriages were unknown, and the roads were few and bad. The two great trunk roads, which now run east and west along both banks of the Brahmaputra, had not at that time been commenced, and there were practically no roads at all in Sylhet and Cachar. In recent times great progress has been made. A regular Public Works Department was established in the year 1868; and in 1880 Local Boards were created for the management of affairs of local interest, and were placed in charge of all roads of purely local importance. To provide the funds for their requirements they were given half the proceeds of a local rate of one-sixteenth the annual value of all landed property, the levy of which was authorized by Regulation III of 1879, together with a grant from provincial revenues and the receipts from pounds and ferries. At the present time there are in the Province 5,915 miles of road fit for vehicular traffic. There are also 2,283 miles of bridle-paths.

In 1847 a steamer service on the Brahmaputra river was established by Government, but the boats ran only at uncertain intervals and they did not proceed beyond Gauhāti. Amongst the documents appended to Mill's Report is a petition by the Assam Company in which it is prayed that a regular service be established, running monthly as far as Gauhāti and, in alternate months, the whole way to Dibrugarh. Two private companies were afterwards formed for the purpose of navigating the Brahmaputra and, at a later date, the Surma river, but their steamers ran very irregularly, and were hampered in their movements by the large flats for goods which they towed, the loading and unloading of which often occasioned great delay at the different stations on the route. In 1883, aided by a government subsidy, the two companies established a service of daily steamers on the Brahmaputra river. This service has gradually been improved until, at the present time, the fleet consists of large, powerful and well-equipped boats, which perform the upward journey from Goalundo to Dibrugarh in less than a week, compared with the three weeks, or even longer, required by the old cargo steamers. A similar service was established on the Surma river in 1887. **Steamers.**

About 1885 two small State railways were constructed, one in the Jorhāt sub-division and the other between Theriaghāt and Companyganj. The latter was closed after the earthquake of 1897. The former, which is only 32½ miles in length, is still being worked with fair success. A more important undertaking of the same period was the Dibru-Sadiya railway which brings a great part of the Lakhimpur district into direct communication with the Brahmaputra. It is a private line, 91 miles long, and gives a good return to the share-holders. This was followed in 1895 by a small private railway from Tezpur to Bālipāra, a distance of 20 miles. **Railways.**

The principal railway in the province, the Assam-Bengal State Railway, was opened for traffic in 1905. This line runs from the port of Chittagong, through Tippera, Sylhet and Cachar, thence across the North Cachar hills to

Lumding, and thence up the south bank of the Brahmaputra to a point on the Dibru-Sadiya Railway. The latter section is connected with Gauhāti by a branch which takes off at Lumding. Its total length in Assam is 607 miles. Two feeder lines have been constructed, the one from Chaparmukh to the Brahmaputra at Silghāt, a distance of 51 miles and the other 23½ miles in length, from Lālbazār to Kātākhāl.

The Eastern Bengal State Railway has important extensions in the Goālpāra and Kāmrup districts, aggregating 180 miles, which bring the province into direct railway communication with Calcutta. A small line from Orāng to Singri, on the Brahmaputra, a distance of 15 miles, is under construction. The gauge of the Jorhāt State Railway is 2′, and that of the Tezpur-Bālipāra and Orāng-Singri lines 2′ 6″; all the other railways in the province are on the metre gauge.

Manipur affairs.

When Manipur was restored to Gambhir Singh, his levy was placed under two British officers, and was paid and supplied with ammunition by the British Government. In 1834 Gambhir Singh died, and the Kubo valley was restored to Burma, the Raja of Manipur receiving as compensation an allowance of five hundred rupees a year. In 1835 the assistance given to the levy was withdrawn and a Political Agent was appointed to reside at Manipur. In 1844 the Queen Dowager attempted to poison the Regent, but failed, and the latter then usurped the throne and held it till his death in 1850. His brother succeeded him, but three months later he was ejected by the prince who had been dispossessed. After a period of disorder, the British Government determined to recognize and support the latter. During the next seventeen years there were no less than eight risings, some of which were repressed by the Raja himself, while others were put down with the aid of British troops and police.

It has already been mentioned that in the Nāga war of 1879 the relief of Kohima was effected by the Maharaja's troops. In return for this service he was created a K.C.S.I. On his death, in 1886, he was succeeded by his son Sura

Chandra. A rival claimant tried to seize the throne, but he was defeated by some military police from Cachar and deported to Hazāribāgh.

The rising of 1890.

In 1890 Sura Chandra was driven from the palace by the Jubrāj and took refuge with the Political Agent. Contrary to the Agent's advice, he declared his intention of abdicating, and left Manipur for Brindaban. On reaching British territory, however, he repudiated his abdication and claimed the aid of the Government of India. It was decided to confirm the Jubrāj as Raja, but the Chief Commissioner was instructed to remove from Manipur the Senapati, or Commander-in-Chief, who had instigated the revolution.

In March 1891 Mr. Quinton, the Chief Commissioner, proceeded with an escort to Manipur and ordered the Senapati to appear before him. He refused to do so; and, when troops were sent into the palace enclosure to effect his arrest, they were fiercely attacked by the Manipuris. The engagement continued till the evening. An armistice was then agreed to, and the Chief Commissioner and four other officers were induced, under a promise of safe conduct, to go unarmed to a durbar in the palace. No agreement being found possible, they started to return, but the crowd closed in, and one of them was fatally wounded by a spear-thrust. The Chief Commissioner and his companions were then kept prisoners for two hours, after which they were beheaded by the public executioner in front of two stone dragons. The attack on the Residency was resumed, and the defenders, thinking it untenable, retreated to Cachar. A month later, Manipur was occupied by British troops and the persons implicated in the outrage were arrested. The Senapati and some others were executed, and the new Raja and his brothers were transported for life.

Subsequent arrangements.

The State had become forfeit, but, after full consideration, it was decided to re-grant it; and Chura Chandra, a youthful scion of a collateral line, was placed upon the throne. During his minority, a considerable part of which he spent in the Chiefs' College at Ajmer, the administration of the State was conducted by the Political Agent, as Superintendent, and numerous reforms were

effected. Better judicial tribunals were introduced, the land revenue administration was carefully revised, and the old system of forced labour was abolished. The boundaries of the State were defined; steps were taken to disarm the hill tribes, and a cart road was opened from Imphāl, the capital, to Kohima.

The superintendency came to an end in 1907, and in the following year the Raja was formally installed on the *gadi*. The President of his Darbar is a member of the Indian Civil Service, who is responsible for the administration of the hill tribes living within the State and for all matters of revenue and finance. The Darbar is the highest court in the State, but all sentences passed by it exceeding five years' rigorous imprisonment require the confirmation of the Raja, and sentences of death that of the Governor. During the great War the Raja placed all his resources at the disposal of the British Government, and his valuable services were recognized by the bestowal of the hereditary title of Maharaja. He raised a corps of 2,000 labourers for France, but the endeavour to raise a second corps led to a rising among the Kukis which was only suppressed with the aid of a large force of Assam Rifles, and Burma Military Police. A new scheme for the administration of the tribes in the Manipur hills was then adopted, and three sub-divisions were opened, each administered by a European, or Anglo-Indian, officer, lent to the State by the Government of Assam.

The earthquake of 1897.

Assam is well known to be subject to earthquakes, and some specially severe ones have already been mentioned. That of 1663, which took place during Mir Jumlah's retreat from Garhgaon, is said to have lasted for half an hour. Another, in Rudra Singh's reign, did serious damage to a number of temples. In modern times the Cachar earthquake of 1869, which did great local mischief, and the one of 1875, which caused some damage to houses in Shillong and Gauhāti, deserve mention. But all recent seismic disturbances were completely thrown into the shade by that which occurred on June 12th, 1897. The focus of this earthquake was not far from Shillong; and, in that

neighbourhood, the movements of the earth attained a magnitude and violence of which those who did not personally experience them can form no conception: to stand was impossible; the surface of the ground moved in waves like those of the sea; large trees were swayed backwards and forwards, bending almost to the ground; and huge blocks of stone were tossed up and down like peas on a drum. In the course of a few minutes or, it may be, seconds, all masonry buildings were overthrown. The destruction was almost as complete in Gauhāti and Sylhet. Large rents were made in the alluvial soil; sand and water were belched forth, and the beds of the rivers were silted up. Great alterations were made in the level of the country; extensive tracts of land subsided and became uncultivable; and in many places roads and railway embankments were utterly destroyed. More than fifteen hundred persons lost their lives, chiefly owing to landslips in the hills and the falling in of river banks in Sylhet. Had the catastrophe occurred at night instead of in the afternoon, the loss of life must necessarily have been far greater. Since this earthquake the town of Barpeta has become almost uninhabitable in the rainy season and the sub-divisional head-quarters have been transferred to Barnagar on the Monās river.

CHAPTER XVIII.

GROWTH OF THE TEA INDUSTRY.

Discovery of the tea plant.

DURING the century for which Assam has been under British rule and enjoyed the blessings of a settled Government, its material prosperity has increased rapidly. Its trade has grown, and its exports of mustard seed, potatoes (introduced in the Khāsi hills by David Scott), silk and other local produce have increased greatly, both in quantity and value. A large part of the lime used in Bengal is supplied from the quarries on the southern face of the Khāsi hills. Coal has been discovered and worked in various parts, especially in the neighbourhood of Mākum in the Lakhimpur district; and mineral oil has been found at Digboi in the same district, where wells have been sunk for its extraction. But by far the most important factor in the growing prosperity and commercial importance of the province has been the remarkable expansion of the tea industry. The discovery that the tea plant grows wild in the upper part of the Brahmaputra valley was made by Mr. Robert Bruce, who has already been mentioned as an agent, first of Purandar Singh, and afterwards of his rival Chandrakānt. He visited Garhgaon for trading purposes in 1823 and there learnt of its existence from a Singpho chief, who promised to obtain some specimens for him. In the following year, these were made over to his brother, Mr. C. A. Bruce, who had left England in 1809 as a midshipman on a ship belonging to the East India Company, and who, on the outbreak of the Burmese war, volunteered for service and was sent up to Sadiya in command of a division of gun boats. Some of the plants thus obtained were submitted to David Scott, by whom they were forwarded to the Superintendent of the Botanical Gardens, Calcutta, for examination. They were pronounced to be of the same family, but not the same species, as the plant from which the Chinese manufacture their tea.

Nothing further seems to have happened until 1832. In that year Captain Jenkins was deputed to report on the resources of Assam, and the existence of the tea plant was pressed upon his notice by Mr. C. A. Bruce. Its identity with the tea of commerce was still doubted by the Calcutta botanists, but its existence was believed to prove that the latter would thrive in India, and Government decided to take steps to introduce it. A Tea Committee consisting of seven civilians, three Calcutta merchants, two native gentlemen, and Dr. Wallich of the Botanical Gardens, was appointed to further this object, and its Secretary, a Mr. Gordon, was sent to China to procure plants, seeds and persons skilled in tea manufacture. Meanwhile fresh enquiries were instituted in Assam under the auspices of Captain Jenkins, and the reports submitted by him and Lieutenant Charlton at last convinced the botanists, the Tea Committee and the Government of the identity of the Assam plant with that of China.

Rival claimants to discovery.

It has sometimes been said that Lieutenant Charlton, and not Mr. Bruce, is entitled to the honour of the discovery of tea in Assam, and in his *Memorandum on Tea Cultivation* written in 1873, the late Sir John Edgar referred to their rival claims as an open question. Lieutenant Charlton, however, did not go to Assam until after the first specimens of the indigenous plant had been sent to Calcutta. The most that he can lay claim to is the final proof that the plant found in Assam is identical with that cultivated in China, but this also is doubtful. Next to Mr. C. A. Bruce, Captain Jenkins seems to have the strongest claim, and he was presented with a gold medal in recognition of his services in this matter by the Agricultural Society of Calcutta.

The brothers Bruce are given the credit for the discovery of tea in Robinson's *Descriptive Account of Assam,* which was published in 1841; and, in a report submitted in 1835 by Dr. Wallich of the Tea Committee,* who was sent to

* This report is quoted in an anonymous pamphlet entitled *Assam: Sketch of its History, Soil and Productions.* London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1839.

Assam to investigate the question of tea cultivation, it is stated that "it was Mr. Bruce and his late brother Major Robert Bruce at Jorhāt who originally brought the Assam tea to public notice many years ago when no one had the slightest idea of its existence." Lastly, there is the following note on the margin of a copy in the India Office Library of Mr. Cosh's Topography of Assam, published in 1837, which, I am informed, is in the handwriting of Captain Jenkins himself:—

"The Tea Committee of Calcutta only became convinced about the end of 1835 that the tea of Assam was the true tea of commerce; previous to that date the specimens alluded to in the text were referred to Camelia by the botanists of Calcutta. The merit of the discovery *rests solely with Mr. Bruce*, who in 1836 manufactured some specimens which were sent home, but were unfit for use. The samples of 1837 were prepared by the Chinese manufacturers brought from China by Mr. Gordon. The samples of 1838, lately received, are also by the Chinese and by natives instructed by them."

First attempt at manufacture.

As a consequence of the discovery, Mr. C. A. Bruce was appointed "Superintendent of the Government Tea Forests," and he at once set himself to discover all the tracts in Lakhimpur where the tea plants were at all plentiful, and to arrange for the purchase of the leaf. This was plucked by the Singphos and other villagers, and brought at irregular intervals to the factory.

But although it was now admitted that the Assam plant was undoubtedly a variety of the true tea plant of China, it was still thought that it had degenerated by neglect of cultivation, and that the proper course would be to introduce the cultivated plant from that country. Mr. Bruce was therefore supplied, not only with some skilled Chinese tea manufacturers, but also with a few of the plants brought to India by Mr. Gordon; and from this time forward there was a constant importation of Chinese tea seed. It was not till years later, when large tracts had been given up to the cultivation of China tea, that the Assam planters became convinced of the great local superiority of the indigenous variety, in respect both of

quality and outturn, and found that for most soils the best plant of all is a hybrid in which the indigenous element largely preponderates. In 1837, Mr. Bruce packed forty-six boxes of tea, but, owing to defective packing, much of it had been damaged by damp before it reached Calcutta, and only a small portion was sent on to England. The report on this, however, was hopeful, and it was declared that Assam tea would be quite capable of competing with the Chinese product "when more care shall be taken in the selection of leaves from plants better pruned, and when greater experience shall have perfected the mode of preparation."

Rise of the tea industry.

The first Government tea plantation was located on a sandbank near the confluence of the Brahmaputra and the Kundil rivers. The poor and porous soil was quite unsuitable for the purpose, and the experiment proved a failure. The plants were therefore removed to Jaipur, where a new garden was opened. This was sold in 1840 to the Assam Company, which had been formed in the previous year with a capital of half a million sterling, and which established factories at Dibrugarh and at the junction of the Burhi Dihing and Tingri rivers. Plantations were made from China seed; but for some time the leaf brought in from the bushes growing wild in the forests continued to be the chief source of supply. In its earlier years the Company was far from prosperous, but about 1852 its prospects began to improve, and in 1859 it had 4,000 acres under cultivation and an outturn of over 760,000 pounds of tea. Its local expenditure exceeded a lakh of rupees a year in 1853, by which time nine other gardens had been started—all in Upper Assam. The existence of indigenous tea in Cachar and Sylhet was soon afterwards ascertained, and in 1855 the pioneer garden in the former district was opened.

Its temporary collapse.

During the next few years the new industry made rapid strides. The conspicuous success of the Assam and Jorhāt companies, the latter of which was formed in 1858 from the estates of the Messrs. Williamson, led to the most extravagant ideas regarding the prospects of tea cultivation,

Fresh gardens were opened in all directions; and a period of wild excitement and speculation supervened. The mania extended even to Government officers; and three Deputy Commissioners, four assistant commissioners and several police officers threw up their appointments to engage in tea-planting. Clearances were made wholesale, often with the sole object of selling them to companies at a large profit; land was taken up irrespective of its suitability for the object in view, or of the supply of labour available, and was planted out with a wholly insufficient number of tea bushes. The result was a general collapse; many of the new companies, unable to meet their liabilities, were wound up, and those which were still carried on suffered a serious depreciation of their shares, through the ignorance of the shareholders who, as remarked by Sir John Edgar in a paper written at the time, "showed as much folly in their hurry to get out of tea as they had a few years before in their eagerness to undertake the speculation."

Recovery and recent progress.

The depression continued until 1869, when it was found that well-managed gardens were yielding a good profit, and that even those which had belonged to the defunct companies were, in many cases, turning out well under careful management. This gave a fresh impetus to the industry, and during the next thirty years there was a steady increase in the number of tea gardens, the area under cultivation, and the output of tea. In 1872 about 27,000 acres were actually planted with tea in the Brahmaputra valley, 23,000 in Cachar, and 1,000 in Sylhet; the outturn in these three tracts was respectively six million, five million, and a third of a million pounds. In 1878 the total production of tea was 28½ million pounds; in 1885 it was 53½ million, and in 1901 it was close on 134 million pounds. An output of 234 million pounds was reached in 1920. In 1922 owing to finer plucking it fell to 199 million pounds, but in the following year it was 237 million pounds, *viz.*, 160 million in the Brahmaputra, and 77 million in the Surma, valley. The area under cultivation in the year last mentioned was 412,000 acres, or about one-fourth of the total quantity of land taken up by the tea planters. The capital invested in

Assam tea gardens in 1903 was estimated roughly at about fourteen million pounds sterling.*

In 1866 no less than 96 per cent. of the tea imported into the United Kingdom came from China and only 4 per cent. from India, but in 1886 only 59 per cent. came from China, while India supplied 38 per cent., and a new rival, Ceylon, contributed 3 per cent. In 1903 the imports of China tea had fallen to 10 per cent., compared with 59 per cent. of Indian and 31 per cent of Ceylon tea.

Improvements in manufacture, etc.

When the cultivation of tea was first commenced in Assam nothing was known of the habits of the tea bush, and it was only after many years of study and experimenting that the planters learnt what was the most suitable soil and climate, and what was the best way of planting out and spacing the bushes, of cultivating, pruning and plucking them, and of withering, rolling and firing the leaf. The procedure in these matters is far from uniform; it varies with the kind of plant grown, and with the local peculiarities of soil and rainfall. It would be tedious to descend to details, but it may be mentioned that one of the greatest improvements has been the introduction of machinery whereby the handling of the tea is reduced to a minimum. Formerly the freshly picked leaves were rolled by hand into lumps, each about the size of a loaf, and were then left to ferment, after which they were roasted on sieves over small charcoal fires. The leaf is now rolled, fired and sifted entirely by machinery, and is practically not handled at all. There are two main varieties of tea, black and green, the latter being produced in comparatively small quantities, chiefly for the American market.

Modern method of manufacture.

The modern system of manufacturing black tea has been described as follows†:—"As soon as the leaf is plucked, it is laid out thinly on trays or sheets in order that it may wither, in which process the rigidity of the leaf cells

* The share list of 68 leading Indian tea companies showed that they had a capital of £9,654,732 and 231,547 acres under tea.

† Paper read by Mr. Stanton, in 1904 before the Royal Society of Arts.

disappears and the leaf becomes soft and easily rolled. When this withering process is accomplished, which depends a good deal on the state of the weather, the leaf is taken into the factory and rolled by machinery, the object of this being to break up the already softened leaf cells, so that the sap then escapes and exudes. When these cells are broken up, the leaf is taken out of the roller and allowed to stand until fermentation, or rather oxidization, sets in; during this process the leaf changes colour, and when it assumes a bright coppery tint, fermentation is stopped by placing the leaf in the drier, and firing it at fairly high temperature; this fixes the fermentation and in the process the colour of the leaf has changed to nearly black. The tea is then sorted through different-sized sieves in order to make it suitable for the requirements of different markets. It is then packed into chests and sent to the market where it is to be sold."

Green, tea of which only about one million pounds is manufactured in Assam, is not withered, but is steamed, and then rolled and fired, without being allowed to ferment.

Diminution in cost of production.

In the early days of the industry the prices obtained for Assam tea were extraordinarily high. The crop of 1839 yielded eight shillings a pound; and when the price fell below two shillings it was said that tea could no longer pay. But the price has continued to fall steadily; it was 1*s*. 5*d*. in 1878, 1*s*. in 1882 and 9½*d*. in 1886, while in 1903 it was only 8½*d*. for tea produced in the Brahmaputra valley and 6¾*d*. for that from the Surma valley, and yet, on the whole, there has generally been a fair margin of profit. Between 1893 and 1898, however, the extension of cultivation was so rapid that the supply of tea quite outstripped the demand, while the cost of placing it on the market was enhanced by the closing of the mints and the increased value thus given to the rupee, in which the coolies' wages were paid. These adverse conditions caused the prices obtained for the tea to fall below the cost of production, and, for a time, the industry entered once more on a period of depression. Every effort was made to reduce expenditure and to open new markets; and this, coupled with the practical stoppage of new extensions, placed the industry

once more on a sound footing. There was a fresh set-back after the war, but this has been followed by a period of remarkable prosperity. For almost the first time in the history of the industry, prices have shown a marked upward tendency, and they are now as high as they were forty years ago. In 1923 the average price realized for tea from the Brahmaputra valley was 15 annas 10 pies and from the Surma valley 13 annas 11 pies per pound.

Owing largely to the fall in price, the consumption of tea in Great Britain and Ireland rose from barely 100 million pounds, or three-and-a-half pounds per head of the population in 1866, to 255 million pounds, or six pounds per head, in 1903. In 1919 the consumption was eight-and-a-half pounds per head. The attempts made by the Indian and Ceylon planters to capture new markets have raised their sales of tea outside the United Kingdom from 39 million pounds in 1895 to 140 million in 1923.

Causes of diminished cost of production.

A variety of causes contributed to the reduction in the cost of placing tea upon the market. By improved cultivation the average yield per acre was increased from two to four hundredweights; the introduction of machinery cheapened the process of manufacture; the amalgamation of small gardens and the reduction of the European staff brought down the charges for supervision, both locally and in the offices of the Calcutta agents; and there was a great diminution in the outlay on machinery, stores, tea-boxes and freight, both local and ocean, all of which cost far less in 1914 than they did formerly. Since the war, however, the cost of all these items and also of labour has risen very considerably.

Rules for the disposal of lands for tea cultivation.

In order to encourage the taking up of land for tea cultivation, very favourable terms have at different times been sanctioned by Government. The first rules were issued in 1838, when it was laid down that any tract of waste land, from 100 to 10,000 acres, might be taken up on a forty-five years' lease, with a rent-free period of from five to twenty years, according as the land was open, or under reeds or forest, and, after that, a progressive assessment on three-quarters of the area, rising to Re. 1-2 an acre. On the

expiry of the lease, one-fourth of the area was to remain free from assessment in perpetuity and the rest was to be assessed, at the option of the grantee, at one-fourth the gross profits, or at the rate paid for rice lands in the neighbourhood. There was a clause providing that a quarter of the area must be cleared within five years, failing which the land was liable to resumption. In 1854 these rules were revised; the term of the lease was extended to 99 years, and the progressive assessments were greatly reduced, so that, during the last 74 years, the rent was fixed at only As. 6 per acre. In 1861 the system of fee simple grants was introduced, under which land was sold at rates ranging from Rs. 2-8 to Rs. 5 per acre. Leases under the previous rules were commutable to fee simple at twenty years' purchase of the rent payable at the time of commutation. A year later the grants were made auctionable, with an upset price of Rs. 2-8-0 per acre, which in 1874 was raised to Rs. 8. Lastly, in 1876, the sale of land outright was put a stop to, and a system of thirty years' leases was introduced; under this system the lease is sold at an upset price of Re. 1 per acre, and the area covered by it is liable, after a revenue-free term, to assessment at progressive rates, rising in the last period of the lease to Re. 1 per acre. The thirty-year lease rules are still in force, but land is no longer granted under them, except in certain tracts where there is still plenty of waste land. Under recent orders all leases expiring prior to 1932 may be renewed up to that year at rates varying from Re. 1-2-0 to Re. 1-4-0 per acre.

The labour force. There are very few landless labourers in Assam, and people who have land naturally prefer the independence and ease of their position as cultivators to the discipline and regular labour of the tea gardens. It was thus found necessary, at a very early stage, to seek for tea garden coolies elsewhere, and in 1853 the Assam Company had already begun to import labourers from Bengal. This involved legislation; and from 1863 to 1901 a series of enactments were passed, with the two-fold object of ensuring to the employer the services of the labourers imported by

him for a period sufficiently long to enable him to recoup the cost of recruiting and bringing them to the garden, on the one hand, and, on the other, of protecting the labourers against fraudulent recruitment, providing for them a proper and sanitary system of transport, and securing their good treatment and adequate remuneration during the term of their labour contracts. The last of these special Acts has been repealed, except in so far as it regulates recruitment, and the only labour contracts now enforceable, otherwise than in the civil courts, are those made under Act XIII of 1859 as amended in 1920. This Act was not originally intended to be used on tea gardens, and its repeal has more than once been under consideration. The most suitable coolies are the aboriginal tribes of Chota Nagpur and the neighbourhood; but the supply of these is insufficient, and is eked out by plains people from the United Provinces and elsewhere, who require a long period of acclimatization, and, even then, are seldom quite satisfactory.

The influence of the tea industry on the prosperity of Assam.

The benefits which the tea industry has conferred on the Province have been many and great. The land most suitable for tea is not adapted to the cultivation of rice, and the greater part of it would still be hidden in dense jungle if it had not been cleared by the tea planters. The gardens gave employment in 1923 to 527,000 labourers. As already stated, most of these labourers have been imported from other parts of India, but this is merely because the local supply of labour is so small. The gardens provide an unfailing source of employment for local cultivators who, for any reason, may wish to work for hire. The literate classes have obtained numerous clerical and medical appointments on the gardens; and the demand for rice to feed the coolies has considerably augmented its price in Assam, and so enabled the cultivators to dispose of their produce at a greater profit than would have been possible had they been obliged to export it to Bengal. A great impetus has also been given to trade, and new markets have been opened in all parts of the province. The existence of the tea industry has been a potent factor in the improvement of communications by rail, river and road. Many of the

persons who go to Assam to work on the tea gardens afterwards settle down there as cultivators, and so help to bring under the plough its vast areas of fertile waste land. In 1923 such persons held 263,000 acres of land direct from Government, in addition to large areas which they occupied as tenants of private land-holders. In the report on the Census of 1921 it was estimated that the total number of immigrants to tea gardens and their descendants numbered about a million and a third, or one-sixth of the total population of the province.

APPENDIX A.

DATES OF SOME ASSAM DYNASTIES.

(i) Tentative Chronology of Kings of Kāmarupa between the fifth and the twelfth centuries.

NAME OF KING.	Capital.	Suggested approximate date of accession.
		A.D.
Pushya Varman	....	430
Samudra Varman	....	446
Bala Varman	....	462
Kalyāna Varman	....	478
Ganapati Varman	....	494
Mahendra Varman	....	510
Nārāyan Varman	....	526
Mahābhuta Varman	....	542
Chandra Mukha Varman ..	....	558
Sthita Varman	....	574
Susthita Varman (Mriganka) ..	....	590
[Supratishtita Varman]		
Bhāskara Varman	....	606
[still reigning in 648]	....	
....		
Sāla Stambha	....	664
Vigraha Stambha	....	680
Pālaka Stambha	....	696
Vijaya Stambha	....	712
....		
Sri Harish	....	740 [?780]
....		
Pralambha	Hāruppesvar ..	800
Harjjara (ruling in 829) ..	Ditto ..	820
Vana Māla	Ditto ..	836
Jay Māla	Ditto ..	852
Vira Bāhu	Ditto ..	868
Bala Varman	Ditto ..	884
....		
Tyāg Singh	....	990
Brahma Pāl	Sri Durjaya ..	1000
Ratna Pāl	Ditto ..	1016
[Purandar Pāl]		
Indra Pāl	Ditto ..	1048
....	....	
Tishya Deb	....	1120
Vaidya Deb	Hamsakonchi ..	1133

(*ii*) *Chronology of Ahom Kings.*

	Reign.	
	Commenced.	Ended.
Sukāphā	1228	1268
Suteuphā	1268	1281
Subinphā	1281	1293
Sukhāngphā	1293	1332
Sukhrāngphā	1332	1364
Sutuphā	1364	1376
interregnum	1376	1380
Tyāokhāmti	1380	1389
interregnum	1389	1397
Sudāngphā	1397	1407
Sujāngphā	1407	1422
Suphākphā	1422	1439
Susenphā	1439	1488
Suhenphā	1488	1493
Supimphā	1493	1497
Suhungmung *or* the Dihingia Raja ..	1497	1539
Suklenmung *or* Garhgāya Raja ..	1539	1552
Sukhāmpha *or* Khorā Raja	1552	1603
Susengphā *or* Burhā Raja *or* Pratāp Singh	1603	1641
Surāmphā *or* Bhagā Raja	1641	1644
Sutyinphā *or* Nariya Raja	1644	1648
Sutyinphā *or* Jayadhvaj Singh ..	1648	1663
Supungmung or Chakradhvaj Singh ..	1663	1669
Sunyātphā *or* Udayāditya Singh ..	1669	1673
Suklāmphā *or* Rāmdhvaj	1673	1675
Suhung	1675	1675
Gobar	1675	1675
Sujinphā	1675	1677
Sudaiphā	1677	1679
Sulikphā *or* Larā Raja	1679	1681
Supātphā *or* Gadādhar Singh	1681	1696
Sukhrungphā *or* Rudra Singh	1696	1714
Sutānphā *or* Sib Singh	1714	1744
Sunenphā *or* Pramata Singh ..	1744	1751
Surāmphā *or* Rājesvar Singh ..	1751	1769
Sunyeophā *or* Lakshmi Singh ..	1769	1780
Suhitpāngphā *or* Gaurināth Singh ..	1780	1794
Suklingphā *or* Kamalesvar Singh ..	1795	1810
Sudinphā *or* Chandrakānt Singh ..	1810	1818
Purandar Singh	1818	1819
Jogesvar Singh	1819	....
Burmese Rule	1819	1824
British Conquest	1824	....
Purandar Singh rules in Upper Assam ..	1832	1838

(*iii*) *Approximate dates of the Koch Kings.*

	Date of	
	Accession.	Death.
In whole Kingdom.		
Bisva Singh	1515	1540
Nar Nārāyan	1540	[1581]
In Western Kingdom, or Koch Bihar.		
Nar Nārāyan	1540	1584
Lakshmi Nārāyan	1584	1622
Bir Nārāyan	1622	1633
Prān Nārāyan	1633	1666

[The dates of the subsequent Rajas of Koch Bihar will be found in Hunter's Statistical Account of that State. They have no bearing on the history of Assam.]

In Eastern Kingdom, or Koch Hājo.		
Raghu Deb	1581	1603
Parikshit	1603	1613
Bali alias Dharma Nārāyan (in Darrang)	1615	1637
Mahendra Nārāyan	1637	1643
Chandra Nārāyan	1643	1660
Surya Nārāyan	1660	1682
Indra Nārāyan	1682	1725

[The independent rule of the Eastern branch of the Koch dynasty terminated with Bali Nārāyan's death in 1637, and the status of his successors was gradually reduced to that of zamindar. A branch of the family, descended from Bijit Nārāyan, son of Parikshit, was in possession of Bijni and another, founded by Gaj Nārāyan, Parikshit's brother, held the small estate of Beltola.]

(iv) *Some names and dates of Kachāri Kings.*

Khun Kara		..	1531 *d.*
Detsung		1531 *a.*	1536 *d.*
Jaso Nārāyan Deb		..	1583 *r.*
Satrudaman *alias* Pratāp Nārāyan ..		1606 *r.*	1610 *r.*
Nar Nārāyan		..	....
Bhim Darpa or Bhimbal		..	1637 *d.*
Indra Ballabh		..	....
Bir Darpa	1644 *r.*	1671 *r.*	1681 *d.*
Garurdhvaj		1681 *a.*	1695 *d.*
Makardhvaj			1695 *a.*
Udayāditya		..	....
Tāmradhvaj		1706 *r.*	1708 *d.*
Sura Darpa		..	1708 *a.*
Haris Chandra Nārāyan		..	1721 *r.*
Kirti Chandra Nārāyan		..	1736 *r.*
Sandhikari		..	1765 *r.*
Haris Chandra Nārāyan (Bhupati) ..		..	1771 *r.*
Krishna Chandra		1790 *r.*	1813 *d.*
Gobind Chandra		1813 *a.*	1830 *d.*

NOTE.—(*a*) Means date of accession.
(*d*) „ „ end of reign.
(*r*) „ reign in progress.

(v) *Tentative Chronology of Kings of Jaintia.*

	Date of		Years known to fall in the reign.
	Accession.	Death.	
Parbat Rāy ..	1500	1516	....
Mājha Gosāin ..	1516	1532	....
Burhā Parbat Rāy ..	1532	1548	....
Bar Gosāin ..	1548	1564	....
Bijay Mānik ..	1564	1580	....
Pratāp Rai	1580	1596	....
Dhan Mānik ..	1596	1605	....
Jasa Mānik ..	1605	1625	1606, 1618
Sundar Rāy ..	1625	1636	....
Chota Parbat Rāy ..	1636	1647	....
Jasamanta Rāy ..	1647	1660	1647
Bān Singh ..	1660	1669	1663
Pratāp Singh ..	1669	1669	....
Lakshmi Nārāyan ..	1669	1697	1678
Rām Singh I ..	1697	1708	1707
Jay Nārāyan ..	1708	1729	....
Bar Gosāin ..	1729	1770*	1731
Chatra Singh ..	1770	1781	....
Jātra Nārāyan ..	1781	1786	....
Bijay Nārāyan ..	1786	1789	1788
Rām Singh II ..	1789	1832	1790, 1813
Rājendra Nārāyan ..	1832	1835	....

* Abdicated.

APPENDIX B.

THE AHOM SYSTEM OF CHRONOLOGY.

THE Ahoms, like the other Shān tribes, have no era in the ordinary sense of the word, but compute time by means of the larger Jovian cycle of sixty years, which they call a *tāosinga*. The same system is in vogue amongst the Chinese, Japanese, Mongols and other Eastern races; it is known also to Hindu astrologers, who call the cycle *Vrihaspati Chakra*, or the wheel of Jupiter. It may have been invented by the Chinese, who have dates in it as far back as the year 2637 B.C. The Chinese are said to use also the true Jovian cycle of twelve years for reckoning domestic occurrences, but this smaller cycle was not known to the Ahoms.

The *lāklis*, or years in the cycle, are named, not numbered, and the names are formed by compounding words of two series, the former containing ten and the latter twelve words. The first word in the *tāosinga* is denoted by the combination of the first word of each series, and the tenth, by that of the tenth word of each; in the eleventh year the denary series is exhausted, so that year is denoted by the combination of the first word of the denary series and the eleventh word of the duodenary, the twelfth by the second word of the denary and the twelfth word of the duodenary, the thirteenth by the third word of the denary and the first word of the duodenary, and so on.

The two series of words are given below, with their equivalents in Chinese, Japanese and Tibetan:—

Denary Series.

Serial Number.	Ahom.	Chinese.	Japanese.	Tibetan.
1	kāp ..	kea ..	kino-je ..	sing.
2	dāp ..	yih ..	kino-to ..	sing.
3	rai ..	ping ..	fino-je ..	me.
4	mung ..	ting ..	fino-to ..	me.
5	plek ..	wu ..	tsutsno-je ..	sa.
6	kāt ..	ke ..	tsutsno-to ..	sa.
7	khut ..	kang ..	kauno-je ..	*l* cag *s*.
8	rung ..	sin ..	kauno-to ..	*l* cag *s*.
9	tāo ..	gin ..	midsno-je ..	chu.
10	kā ..	kwei ..	midsno-to ..	chu.

Duodenary Series.

Serial Number.	Ahom.	Chinese.	Japanese.	Tibetan.
1	tyeo ..	toze ..	ne ..	byi-ba
2	plāo ..	chāo ..	us ..	*g* lang.
3	ngi ..	yin ..	torru ..	*s* tag.
4	māo ..	māo ..	ov ..	yo-s.
5	si ..	shin ..	tats ..	*b* rug.
6	siu ..	sze ..	mi ..	*sb* rul.
7	singa ..	wu ..	uma ..	*r* ta.
8	mut ..	we ..	tsitsuse ..	*l* cag.
9	sān ..	shin ..	sar ..	*sp* rou.
10	rāo ..	yeo , ..	torri ..	bya.
11	mit ..	seo ..	in ..	kyi.
12	keo ..	hā ..	y ..	pag.

The Tibetans, it should be observed, compound their words so as to form a cycle not of sixty, but of 252 years. Their method is described in Csoma de Körös' Tibetan Grammar, pp. 147 and ff.

I have been unable to obtain any explanation of the Ahom words used in these series. The Chinese call the words in their denary series *tien kan,* or terrestrial signs, while those in the duodenary series are the horary characters, and are known as *teche* or celestial signs. The denary series in the Japanese system is made up of the elements, of which they reckon five, doubled by the addition of the masculine and feminine signs *je & to;* the second series consists of the signs of the zodiac. The Tibetans, like the Japanese, employ the names of the elements for the denary series, but, for the duodenary, they take the names of certain animals—mouse, ox, tiger, etc.

The Ahoms commence their first cycle in the year 568 A.D., so that in order to ascertain the year in our era, corresponding to an Ahom *lākli,* the number of completed *tāosingas* should be multiplied by sixty, the number of the *lākli,* or year in the current *tāosinga,* added, and also 568. In inscriptions, as well as in the Ahom *buranjis,* the name of the *lākli* alone is given, and not the serial number of the *tāosinga,* but it is universally reckoned that Sukāphā entered Assam in the first year of the twelfth *tāosinga,* and it is easy to keep a tally of the *tāosingas* from that time on, as numerous events occurring in each *tāosinga* are mentioned in all the *Buranjis.* Thus Supātphā's coins are dated in *lākli rāisān.* This is equivalent to the 33rd year, and as it must be the nineteenth *tāosinga,* the date will be $18 \times 60 + 33 + 568 = 1681$ A.D. This, according to the *Buranjis* is the year of Supātphā's accession to the throne.

APPENDIX C.

TRANSLATION OF AN OLD COPPER-PLATE INSCRIPTION.

[THIS set of copper-plates refers to a grant of land by Raja Ratna Pāl. It was obtained by the author from a cultivator in mauza Bargaon, district Darrang, Assam, who said that it was found by his grandfather while ploughing his fields. The translation is by the late Dr. Hœrnle, who published a full account of the plates in the *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, vol. lxvii, pt. I, page 99. Most of the footnotes which accompanied the original translation have been omitted. Dr. Hœrnle thought that this inscription was probably made in the first half of the eleventh century.]

TRANSLATION.

(FIRST PLATE: line 1) Hail!

(Verse I.) "He may be seen incessantly exhibiting his beautiful white figure, in the Tāndava (dance) according to the strict rules of that dance, (guided), by the stainless reflection of his body formed on his own nails; even thus does Çankara (or Çiva), who, though like the Supreme Being he is endowed with the quality of omnipresence (lit., expansion), assumes numberless forms at his absolute will, shines forth as the Lord of the World for the sake of the welfare of that (world).

(2) "What? Is it that here flows the light of the white rays (of the moon) in congelation, or a solution of crystals; or is it that the beautiful Çankari (or female counterpart of Çiva) and his Çakti (or energy) is intently engaged in marking quick-time music in its primeval form?" It may be with such musings as these about the nature of its water that the happy population (of the country) quickly resorts to that river Lauhitya (or Brahmaputra), which by removing all sins protects the world.

(Verse 3.) Of *Hari* (*i.e.*, Vishnu) who, in the form of a boar, raised the earth when she had sunk beneath the ocean, Naraka of the Asura (or demon) race was the son, who acted the very part of the moon to the personal charms of the ladies of the Suras (or gods).

(4) Who, declaring Aditi to be a woman, weak, decrepit, timid, stupid, deserted by her kinsmen, and overtaken by misfortune, conquered the Suras, and snatched away her ear-rings which were precious as being typical of the glory of the Suras.

(5) In Prāgjyōtisa, the best of towns, provided with brilliant troops of warriors like systems of suns, and lovely-faced women of

many kinds, he took up his residence, after he had acquired prosperity, equal in pleasantness to the pride of his arms.

(6) "I am grown too old (to engage) in war, and my father will gain a brilliant reputation," bethinking himself thus, out of kindly consideration, he lived carelessly: so Hari removed him to heaven. Alas! for one who is keenly desirous of glory there is truly in this world no counting of kinship.[1]

(7) Then his wise son, *Bhagadatta* by name, whose shoulder was girt with the mantle of far-reaching glory, and who by the multitude of his good qualities won the affections of the (whole) world, carried upon himself the burden (of the government) of the country with propriety and much prosperity.

(8) Then the mighty *Vajradatta*, having like Vajrin (*i.e.*, Indra) conquered his enemies, being in beauty like a large diamond, and enjoying the reputation of having achieved the conquest of the world through his own honesty and energy, obtained that kingdom of his brother, just as fire (attains) brilliancy on the setting of the sun.[2]

(9) After thus, for several generations, kings of Naraka's dynasty had ruled the whole country, a great chief of the Mlecchas, owing to a turn of (adverse) fate, took possession of the kingdom. (This was) *Çalastambha*. In succession to him also there were chiefs, altogether twice ten (*i.e.*, twenty) in number, who are well known as *Vigrahastambha* and the rest.

(10) Seeing that the twenty-first of them, the illustrious chief, Tyaga Simha[3] by name, had departed to heaven without (leaving) any of his race (to succeed him).

(Second Plate: obverse:) his subjects, thinking it well that a Bhauma (*i.e.*, one of Naraka's race) should be appointed as their lord, chose *Brahmapāla*, from among his kindred, to be their king on account of his fitness to undertake the government of the country.

(11) "Single-handed he overcame his enemy in battle: why indeed should this appear strange to his detractors (seeing that), on

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[1] Naraka is said to have been slain by Krishna, who is an incarnation of Vishnu or Hari. The latter was Naraka's father: hence the father slew his son. The poet represents this as a sort of voluntary sacrifice on the part of Naraka, who, feeling himself too old for his accustomed warlike exploits, purposely, *i.e.*, out of consideration for his father, lived in a careless fashion, in order to afford his father an opportunity of slaying him, so that his father (Vishnu) might have the reputation of having slain the much-feared demon Naraka. The poet, however, cannot refrain from adding a word of disapproval of Vishnu's conduct setting aside the claims of kinship for the sake of earning a reputation.

[2] There is here a play on the word *vajra*, which means both "the thunderbolt" and "a diamond." Indra is called *vajrin*, or "the wielder of *vajra*" or "the thunderbolt;" and Vajradatta or "the gift of Vajra" is said to be as beautiful as a *vajra* or "diamond."

[3] The meaning apparently is that the whole series consisted of 21 members, *viz.*, Çālastambha, 19 others, and Tyāga Simha. It is not clear whether the name of the last king is *Çrityāga* or *Tyāga*.

this point Hara and Hari are examples, and Bhishma and indeed many others besides." Thus arguing, his warriors have always thought very highly of (the conduct of) their home-staying (king), seeing that his enemies fled away in all eight directions.[1]

(12) His desire being stimulated by the taste of the joys due to his prosperity, he married a young woman who by reason of her devotion to her people bore the name of Kuladevi, which is, as it were, the standing name for Lakshmi (or "good fortune") attainable by (all) rulers sprung from any (noble) family of the world.

(13) By him, who had such a reputation, was begotten on her a son called *Ratnapāla*, who gained renown because his people justly concluded that a jewel-like king would, by his good qualities, foster the most worthy among them.[2]

(14) By reason of the elephants, pearls, carried forth by the impetus of the unrestrainable stream of blood running from the split foreheads of the elephants of his enemies, his (*i.e.*, Ratnapāla's) battlefield looked beautiful like a market-place strewn with the stores of merchants, and ruby-coloured through (the blood of) the slain.

(15) Then having placed him (*i.e.*, Ratnapāla) on the throne, to be to the dynasty of Naraka what the sun is to the lotuses, he (*i.e.*, Brahmapāla), the spotless champion, went to heaven; for noble-minded men who know the good and the evil of the world know to do that which is suitable to the occasion.

(Second Plate: obverse: line 28: Prose.) In his capital, the heat (of the weather) was relieved by the copious showers of ruttish water flowing from the temples of his troops of lusty (war-) elephants which had been presented to him by hundreds of kings conquered by the power of his arms entwined in clusters of flashes of his sharp sword. Though (that capital) was crowded with a dense forest, as it were, of arms of his brave soldiers who were hankering after the plunder of the camps of all his enemies, yet was it fit to be inhabited by wealthy people (merchants). (In it) the disk of the sun was hid (from view) by the thousands of plastered turrets which are rendered still whiter by the nectar-like smiles of the love-drunk fair damsels (standing on them). It was frequented by many hundreds of well-to-do people,[3] just as a forest planted on the heights of the Malaya mountains (is frequented) by snakes. It

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[1] Brahmapāla appears to have been of a mild and peaceable disposition and this is the way that the poet expresses that fact. His son Ratnapāla formed the strongest contrast to him, being a very strong and warlike ruler, with a very long reign.

[2] There is here a play on the word *ratna* or "jewel." A *ratna-upama* or "jewel-like" prince may be expected to become a *ratna-pāla* or "jewel-protecting" king.

[3] There is here a complicated verbal conceit, which cannot be exactly translated. *Bhogin* means both a "well-to-do, pleasure-loving man" and "a snake." The Malaya mountains, with its fragrant breezes, will suit the former, while the forest will suit the latter.

is adorned by learned men, religious preceptors and poets who have made it their place of resort, just as the sky is adorned by Mercury, Jupiter and Venus.[1] It resembles the summit of mount Kailāsa in being the residence of the Parameçvara (*i.e.*, supreme ruler, or Çiva, the supreme God), and in being inhabited by a Vitteça (*i.e.*, a master of wealth, or Kuvera the God of wealth). Like the cloth which protects the king's broad chest, its boundaries were encompassed by a rampart, furnished with a fence strong like that used for the game-birds of the Çakas, fit to cause chagrin to the king of Gurjara, to give fever to the heads of the untameable elephants of the chief of Gauda, to act like bitumen in the earth to the lord of Kerala, to strike awe into the Bāhikas and Tāīkas, to cause discomfiture (lit., pulmonary consumption) to the master of the Deccan country; and generally to serve for the purpose of discomfiting the (king's) enemies. It is rendered beautiful by the river Lauhitya which gives relief to the fair damsels, that after the exertion of sexual enjoyment ascend to the retirement of their stuccoed turrets, by the spray of its current gently wafted up by the breeze charmingly resonant with the prattle of the flocks of love-drunk females of the Kala-hamsa ducks;

(Second Plate: reverse:) and which (river) also resembles the cloth of the finely wrought flags carried by the elephants of Kailāsa, and the jewelled mirrors used in their coquetries by the numerous females (*i.e.*, the Apsarases) of the lord of heaven (*i.e.*, Indra). It is an object of respect to merchants who are the owners of numerous (kinds of) wares. Such is the town in which the lord of Prāgjyōtisa took up his residence and which he called by the appropriate name of the "Impregnable one" (*durjaya*). Here dulness might be observed in necklaces, but not in the senses (of the inhabitants); fickleness in apes, but not in their minds; changefulness in the motions of the eyebrows, but not in promises; accidents (happening) to things, but not to the subjects. Here capriciousness might be seen (only) in women; reeling (only) in the gait of women excited with the (tender) intoxication of springtide; covetousness (only) in evil-doers; safe addiction to the sipping of honey (only) in swarms of bees; exceeding devotion to love (only) in Brahmany ducks (*Anas Casarca*); and eating of flesh (only) in wild beasts. In that town, which emulated the residence of Vāsava (*i.e.*, Indra) the king, who resembles the moon in that he makes his virtues to wax, as the moon makes the tides of the encircling ocean to wax, and in that he causes his enemies to

[1] Here is again a verbal conceit: *budha* means both "a learned man" and "Mercury;" *guru* both "religious preceptor" and "Jupiter," and *kavya* both "a poet" and "Venus." The capital was to the men, what the sky is to the planets.

experience the deprivation of their wealth, as the moon causes the ponds to experience the deprivation of their lotuses; and who resembles the sun in that he makes his feet to rest on the heads of his enemies, as the sun makes his rays to rest on the summits of the mountains, and in that he delights in making his copper-mines lucrative, as the sun makes the lotus-ponds brilliant; who, being a Parameçvara (or paramount sovereign), takes pleasure in (the country of) Kāmarupa; who, though being of the Bhauma (*i.e.*, of Naraka's) race, delights in being the enemy of the Dānavas (or demons); who being a *Purusōttama* or "perfect man," does not act as a *Janārdana* (or troubler of his subjects); who, though being a valiant man, walks (leisurely) like an elephant: whose figure is such as to out-do Manmatha (or the god of love); whose profundity such as to put into the shade the ocean; whose intelligence such as to be a guarantee of the conquest of the world; whose valour such as to surpass Skanda (or the god of war): who is an Arjuna in fame, a Bhimasena in war, a Kritānta (or god of death) in wrath, a forest-conflagration in destroying his plant-like adversaries: who is the moon in the sky of learning, the (sweet) breeze of the Malaya mountains in the midst of the jasmin-like men of good birth, the sun in eclipsing his enemies, the mountain of the East in the successful advancement of his friends: this king, the *Parameçvara, Parama-bhattāraka, Mahārājādhirāja*, the illustrious *Ratnapāla* Varma-deva who mediates at the feet of the *Māhārājādhirāja*, the illustrious *Brahmapāla* Varma-deva, may he prosper.

(Second Plate· reverse; line 52.) With reference to the land producing two thousand (measures of) rice, and the fields with the clusters of gourds, together with the inferior land of the hamlet of Vāmadeva, (the whole), situated on the northern bank (of the Brahmaputra), within the district of the "Thirteen Villages," the king sends his greetings and commands to all and several who reside (there): to the (common) people of the Brāhman and other castes, headed by the district revenue officers and their clerks, as well as to the other (higher-class) people, such as the Rājanakas, Rājaputras, Rājavallabhas, etc., and above them the Rānakas, Rājñis and Rājas and, in fact, to all who may reside there in future at any time.

Be it known to you, that this land, together with its houses, paddy-fields, dry land, water, cattle-pastures, refuse-lands, etc., of whatever kind it may be, inclusive of any place within its borders, and freed from all worries on account of the fasting of elephants, the fastening of boats, the searching for thieves, the inflicting of punishments, the tenant's taxes, the imposts for various causes, and the pasturing of animals, such as elephants, horses, camels, cattle, buffaloes, goats and sheep, as set forth in this charter:—

(Third Plate: line 58: verse 1.) There was a Brāhman in the land, Devadatta, of the Pārāsara Gōtra and the Kānva çākhā; a leader among the Vājasaneyakas, whom on having found to be the

foremost vedic scholar, the Vedas, in their threefold division, felt themselves satisfied.

(2) He had a son, Sadganjgādatta, richly endowed with every virtue, who ever kept the holy fire burning (in his house), and at the sight of whose devotion to the six holy duties a multitude of people were established in their faith in the whole body of Brāhmans from Bhrigu downwards.

(3) He had a wife, Çyāmāyikā, devoted to her husband and endowed with (every) virtue, who shines like the streak (crescent or quarter) of the moon, pure in form and dispelling the darkness.

(4) From her was born a son, Viradatta, a leader among the learned in the Çāstras, and fearful of (committing) any offence, on the experience of whose deep-seated piety and formidable intellect the Kāli age felt, as it were, humbled.

(5) To him, on the Visnupadi Sankrānti, in the twenty-fifth year of my reign (this land), is given by me for the sake of the good and the glory of my father and of myself.

(Its) boundaries (are as follows): On the east, the Çālmali-tree[1] on the big dike; on the south-east, the Çālmali-tree standing on the steep bank (of the river Brahmaputra) by the anchorage of the boats for the Pāthi fish of the Rusi-class; on the south the Badari-tree by the same anchorage of boats; on the south-west the Kāçimbala-tree by the same anchorage of boats; on the west the Açvatha-tree standing on the steep bank (of the river); at the bend to the north-west, the dike of the fields, as well as a Kāçimbala-tree; on the north-west the Hijjala-tree on the dike of the fields; at the bend to the east and north, the dike of the fields and a pair of Çālmali-trees; further at the bend to the east and south, the dike of the fields and a pair of Kāçimbala-trees; at the slight bend to the east and south, the dike of the fields and a pair of Çālmali-trees; on the north, the Kāçimbala-tree on the big dike; and on the north-east, a Vetasa-tree on the big dike.

The Seal.

Hail! The lord of Prāgjyōtisa, the Mahārāj-ādhirāja, the illustrious *Ratnapāla* Varma Deva.

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[1] The trees here mentioned are: Çalmali, *Bombax malabaricum;* Badari, *Zizyphus Jujuba* or Jujube tree; Kacimbala, an inferior kind of Çimbala, which I cannot identify; Açvatha, *Ficus religiosa;* Hijjala, *Barringtonia acutangula;* Vetasa, *Calamus Rotang.*

APPENDIX D.

DESCRIPTION OF AHOM MANUSCRIPT RECORDS.

When the Ahōms invaded Assam at the beginning of the 13th century they were already in possession of a written character and a literature of their own. The use of paper was unknown, and they employed instead strips of bark of the *Sāci* tree, known in Bengal as *Agar* (Aquilaria Agallocha), the Aloes wood of the Bible, from which are obtained the perfumed chips which are so largely exported from Sylhet for use as incense in temples. The manner of preparing the bark for use as a writing material is as follows:—

A tree is selected of about 15 or 16 years' growth and 30 to 35 inches in girth, measured about 4 feet from the ground. From this the bark is removed in strips, from 6 to 18 feet long, and from 3 to 27 inches in breadth. These strips are rolled up separately with the inner or white part of the bark outwards, and the outer or green part inside, and are dried in the sun for several days. They are then rubbed by hand on a board, or some other hard substance, so as to facilitate the removal of the outer or scaly portion of the bark. After this, they are exposed to the dew for one night. Next morning the outer layer of the bark (*nikari*) is carefully removed, and the bark proper is cut into pieces of a convenient size, 9 to 27 inches long and 3 to 18 inches broad. These are put into cold water for about an hour, and the alkali is extracted, after which the surface is scraped smooth with a knife. They are then dried in the sun for half an hour, and, when perfectly dry, are rubbed with a piece of burnt brick. A paste prepared from *mātimāh* (*Phaseolus radiatus*) is next rubbed in, and the bark is dyed yellow by means of yellow arsenic. This is followed again by sun-drying, after which the strips are rubbed as smooth as marble. The process is now complete, and the strips are ready for use.

The labour of preparing the bark and of inscribing the writing is considerable, and, apart from this, much greater value is attached to an old manuscript, or *puthi*, than to a new copy of it. These *puthis* are very carefully preserved, wrapped up in pieces of cloth, and are handed down as heirlooms from father to son. Many of them are black with age, and the characters have in places almost disappeared. The subjects dealt with are various. Many are of a historical character; others describe the methods of divination in use amongst the Ahom Deōdhāis and Bāilongs; others again are of a religious nature, while a few contain interesting specimens of popular folklore. A list of these *puthis* which had come, at that time, to notice will be found in my Report on the Progress of Historical Research in Assam.

APPENDIX E.

LIST OF CHIEF COMMISSIONERS AND OTHER HEADS OF PROVINCE.

Chief Commissioners of Assam.

Colonel R. H. Keatinge, V.C., C.S.I. ..	1874 to 1878
Sir S. C. Bayley, K.C.S.I.	1878 to 1881
Sir C. A. Elliott, K.C.S.I.	1881 to 1885
Sir W. E. Ward, K.C.S.I.	1885 to 1887 offg.
Sir D. Fitzpatrick, K.C.S.I.	1887 to 1889
Mr. J. W. Quinton, C.S.I.	1889 to 1891
Sir W. E. Ward, K.C.S.I.	1891 to 1896
Sir H. J. S. Cotton, K.C.S.I.	1896 to 1902
Mr. J. B. Fuller, C.S.I., C.I.E.	1902 to 1905

Lieutenant-Governors of Eastern Bengal and Assam.

Sir Bampfylde Fuller, K.C.S.I., C.I.E. ..	1905 to 1906
Sir Lancelot Hare, K.C.S.I., C.I.E.	1906 to 1911
Sir Charles Bayley, K.C.S.I.	1911 to 1912

Chief Commissioners of Assam.

Sir Archdale Earle, K.C.S.I., K.C.I.E. ..	1912 to 1918
Sir Nicholas Beatson Bell,* K.C.S.I., K.C.I.E. ..	1918 to 1921

Governors of Assam.

Sir William Marris, K.C.S.I., K.C.I.E. ..	1921 to 1923
Sir John Kerr, K.C.I.E.	1923 to ——

In addition to the above, there were several short officiating appointments, *viz.*, Sir William Ward in 1883, Brigadier-General Collett, C.B., in 1891, Sir Charles Lyall, K.C.S.I., C.I.E., in 1894, Mr. Fuller in 1900, Mr. C. W. Bolton, C.S.I., in 1903, Col. P. R. T. Gordon, C.S.I., in 1914, and Sir W. J. Reid, K.C.I.E., C.S.I., in 1925.

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* Was also Governor for the first two months of the new régime.

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